CURRICULAR CHOICES IN STUDIO VIOLIN TEACHING

by

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Music educators regard selecting repertoire as one of the most important and difficult aspects of teaching music. Repertoire is a central element of curriculum, because it facilitates both musical and technical growth and, when chosen well, often reflects the philosophy and goals of the teacher. However, this central aspect of education has not yet been researched in the studio violin setting. This instrumental case study sought to explore the repertoire selection practices through semi-structured interviews of 10 experienced studio violin teachers. Results indicate that an informal set of repertoire expectations exist within the violin community. These expectations manifest themselves through a relative uniformity in participants' personal core repertoire. Teachers serve student interests by facilitating participation in shared musical experiences with their peer groups rather than utilizing repertoire as means of personalizing instruction. The institutions, organizations, and musical communities that participants work within influence and limit participants' curricular choices. Future research with a more representative population of studio violin teachers is suggested.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The violin has one of the largest bodies of solo repertoire of any classical instrument, yet concertgoers regularly hear the same set of popular pieces. Most serious violinists will have studied Kreutzer's 42 Etudes, and a movement from one of Bach's Six Solo Sonatas and Partitas is an essential component of many auditions. Both collections are cornerstones of violin repertoire, without which the violinist's education is incomplete. Likewise, virtually all teachers demand scales and consider technical facility in arpeggios and double-stopping indispensable for good musicianship. With these components, there appears to be an informal, established curriculum that exists alongside the formal constraints of programming expectations. But why is this so? Why does it appear that classical violinists play the same pieces, or conversely, why is it that teachers decide to teach the same set of pieces?

These questions regarding the core repertoire drew me to my broader topic of curricular choices in studio violin teaching, and more specifically, to repertoire selection practices. I posit that the overlapping functions and characteristics of repertoire and a curriculum composed of learning objectives render these two elements of education nearly indistinguishable from one another. Accordingly, it follows that one can discern what teachers value from the repertoire they choose: which skills are fundamental; what comprises musical maturity and beauty; how they balance their own expectations with those of parents, students, audiences, and organizations; and to what extent they consider the interests, motivation level, and opinions of their students.

This thesis is also built on two other assumptions. First, that the choices teachers make, intentional or otherwise, are largely informed by their own experiences. Studio

violin teaching has its origins in the master-apprentice tradition of European conservatories. When information is inherited in this way, attribution may be lost or obscured and the popularity or lack of popularity of a piece or a method is amplified over time. Second, given the nature of the traditional conservatory model and the relative isolation of the studio, many teachers may lack pedagogical training specific to the studio setting (Burwell, Carey, & Bennett, 2017). Teachers cannot teach what they do not know. While some teachers may choose to supplement their tertiary education (e.g., college education, vocational school) by undertaking further formal study through graduate-level coursework, institutes, or workshops, they may also rely heavily on their own musical experiences when teaching and selecting repertoire. Recognizing that studio violin teachers have a diversity of backgrounds, I have chosen to highlight the repertoire selection practices of experienced studio violin teachers who have deeply considered their pedagogical philosophies.

Researcher Positionality

Like many violinists, my introduction to the instrument originated with the Suzuki method. I began taking lessons when I was nine years old, older than many Suzuki students but a typical age for the few students in the state of Oregon who attend public schools that offer instrumental music instruction during primary school. I participated in my school symphony and string orchestra as soon as they were offered in middle school as well as throughout high school, taking lessons sporadically during later years. I was lucky that my school had a strings program, which in this state are rare in similarly small and rural schools. Although we did not attend festivals or compete in

solo or ensemble competitions, the director made sure to create an inclusive environment in which fun and an appreciation for music were of utmost importance.

I am now a music major. As a freshman, I remember being often impressed that my violin professor could attribute her exercises and methods to the corresponding pedagogue. She freely gave explanations for her teaching, increasing my curiosity regarding why one might teach a skill or concept in a particular order or certain way. I later took her course on advanced string pedagogy and have since done training for the first three Suzuki books.

I know from my own experience how much the repertoire I play affects my relationship to the instrument. When I love a piece, my practice time multiplies, sometimes to the detriment of other material that likely deserves just as much preparation. Engaging repertoire motivates me and serves as a reminder of how much I enjoy creating music with others. On the contrary, the times when I have been assigned repertoire that I was not ready for technically have been some of my most challenging moments. I felt discouraged and unsure of my progress. Being technically unready kept me from fully enjoying performing, which showed too, even if it was simply an etude—a technical exercise. For it is true, as one of my teachers said, that, "if you don't enjoy the music you're playing, how can you expect anyone else to?" In this way, this research is informed by my experiences learning and learning to teach the violin.

Statement of the Problem

Selecting repertoire is widely regarded by music educators as one of the most important aspects of teaching music. It is a central component of the curriculum and one of the basic responsibilities of teaching (Hopkins, 2013). Carefully chosen repertoire

serves as the foundation that facilitates the musical and artistic growth of students (McCallum, 2007). By virtue of its close relationship with curricular goals, the repertoire that teachers choose speaks to their teaching philosophy in terms of what musical achievement and growth entails (Apfelstadt, 2000). However, despite repertoire's important function in music education, it is unclear how and why teachers select the repertoire they do and whether research regarding repertoire selection meets their needs.

Selecting repertoire is also regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of teaching music. Identifying desired learning outcomes and then finding the specific pieces that align with them involves considerable time and expertise (Hopkins, 2013). Teachers may also be faced with the paralyzing problem of too many choices, for the selection of one piece necessitates the exclusion of countless others (Reynolds, 2000). External pressures such as programming needs and the discrepancy between the expectations of students, parents, and teachers are factors that teachers may take into consideration when selecting repertoire (Apfelstadt, 2000).

Research suggests music educators should and do consider several guiding principles when selecting repertoire. The ambiguous characteristics of *quality* and *craftsmanship* are paramount (Crochet, 2006, p. 74). Teachers should consider that musical characteristics can function as learning objectives and choose repertoire accordingly (McCallum, 2007); for example, they might define historical and stylistic variety or a specific technique as a priority. They should consider the scope and sequence of their curriculum—that is, what the student should learn from playing a sequence of pieces (Standerfer & Hunter, 2010). This requires that teachers assess the

difficulty of repertoire and match it to the ability of their students. Preliminary studies also suggest that when designing a musical curriculum, teachers try to balance students' interests and pre-existing skills and knowledge—which often includes popular music—with their own goals and the traditional models of the discipline (McPhail, 2013).

Evidence indicates that teachers use a variety of strategies and resources when selecting repertoire. They draw on their own experience with past teachers and repertoire they heard performed or they themselves performed (Forrester, 2017). They might collaborate with their peers and mentors (Haston & Leon-Guerrero, 2008) or use repertoire lists that other teachers or professional organizations have compiled (Rosene, 2004). They may choose to continue their education by attending workshops, conferences, trainings, degree programs, or conduct their own research, although, according to a survey of instrumental teachers, teachers' own experiences remain their top-ranked influence on implementing and planning instruction (Bauer & Berg, 2001).

The one-to-one nature of the studio setting often affords teachers the opportunity to build a close rapport with their students, as a student may study with the same teacher for many years (Carey & Grant, 2014; Gaunt, 2008; Nerland, 2007; Parkes & Wexler, 2012). Thus, the same violin teacher may be responsible for guiding their students through a wide range of musical experiences. This may include starting beginners, whether they are kindergartners or retirees, to preparing students for recitals, auditions, competitions, and ensemble playing outside of the teacher's own studio. Generally, elements of the curriculum change as the student progresses. However, after learning a foundation of basic technique (how to hold the instrument and how to make a sound), a core curriculum comprised of printed musical materials may be broadly separated into

categories. These may include ensemble repertoire, solo repertoire (concertos and concert pieces), and technical studies (scale studies and etudes) (Rhoades & Shipps, 1991). The one-to-one setting typically allows teachers to tailor their lessons to the individual needs of their students, granting instructors a high degree of autonomy over their students' musical education (Burwell et al., 2017).

Yet, one consequence of the one-to-one nature of the studio setting is that often teachers work in isolation (Burwell et al., 2017). Preservice music teachers (in the K-12 school system) and applied music teachers at tertiary educational institutions express a need for further pedagogical training outside of their undergraduate education (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Bauer & Berg, 2001). Many teachers learn by trial and error through experience and rely on their peer networks as a valuable resource (Forrester, 2017). Thus, teachers may lack access to research related to pedagogical content knowledge generally and repertoire selection specifically.

Need for the Study

Music educators as a community have identified the understudied topic of repertoire selection as both difficult and important. They feel that it is important that they make informed choices, because repertoire selection is such a significant component of music education (Byo, 1988). If teachers feel this is important, then knowledge of how they are already making these choices is thus essential to improving the repertoire selection process.

There is a substantial body of qualitative, quantitative, and anecdotal literature that describes how music educators at secondary and tertiary institutions choose repertoire. Most of this literature, however, is written for or by band educators (Backes,

2010; Byo, 1988; Chen, 2018; Crochet, 2006; Forrester, 2017; Geraldi, 2008; Kish, 2005; McCallum, 2007; Rosene, 2004; Sheldon, 2000; Woike, 1990). Furthermore, a literature search of the major databases JSTOR and ProQuest and general Google Scholar and University of Oregon library database queries did not yield any studies regarding repertoire selection specifically for strings. Practitioner journals and music organizations publish their own lists of suggested repertoire and recommend the factors that educators should consider when they plan their curriculum. However, these articles are often written with the K-12 education community as the intended audience. Their articles tend to be prescriptive in nature rather than investigative or research-based and do not attempt to determine influences on current teacher practices and attitudes. This literature may shed light on studio teaching practices to a certain extent, as educational settings such as the middle school band or elementary school general music classroom do share characteristics and learning objectives with the studio. However, it is no substitute for studying the processes that unfold in the studio itself.

Although studio teaching continues to be an emerging area of interest to researchers, there is little information on repertoire selection practices in the studio setting, let alone the violin studio. An instrumental case study of studio violin teachers' repertoire selection practices will supplement existing, more generalized literature on repertoire. It will call upon teachers to reflect more closely on their decision-making and the challenges regarding repertoire, while also providing an in-depth understanding to a largely undocumented aspect of pedagogy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to discover the processes by which studio violin teachers select repertoire for their students and the rationale for doing so. In addition, it may serve as an example of current violin studio curriculum practices and a practical resource for other violin teachers.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do studio violin teachers select repertoire for their students?
    a. What factors influence studio violin teachers' choice of repertoire?
    b. What factors do studio violin teachers identify as perceived constraints when they choose repertoire?
    c. What resources do studio violin teachers access and subsequently use when making repertoire selection choices?
2. What impacts on student outcomes do studio violin teachers believe are connected to repertoire choice?

Definition of Key Terminology Used in This Thesis

ASTA

American String Teacher Association, a professional organization for string and orchestra teachers and players.

Core repertoire

The body of violin literature deemed fundamental and essential by studio violin teachers, as manifested both in their personal studio teaching and the violin teaching community at large.

Curriculum

The materials and the methods used to realize learning objectives in an educational setting.

Non-traditional repertoire

Stated in the interview guide and subjectively defined by the interviewee as "any repertoire that [the interviewee] or others might consider 'non-traditional.'" This term is commonly understood to include repertoire that is not frequently learned or performed, is not Western art music, or uses an uncommon system of musical notation.

Repertoire

Musical works; includes concertos, etudes, exercises, scales, music written for ensembles including violin, and other printed musical works.

Repertoire selection

The process by which studio violin teachers choose the music that they assign to their students.

Sequencing

The idea that skills, techniques, and/or certain pieces should be taught in a particular order, usually one in which technical and musical challenges and demands incrementally increase.

Supplemental repertoire

Repertoire chosen by the teacher that is not part of the core repertoire he or she teaches.

Studio violin teacher

A violinist who teaches in a one-to-one setting as the primary teacher.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Curriculum

In both music education research and education research more broadly, definitions of "curriculum" vary widely in specificity and function. *Curriculum* describes the materials and the methods used to realize learning objectives in an educational setting. It may also be the set of skills and knowledge teachers hope their students will learn. Curriculum may not only describe a particular method, but the actual decisions and adaptations teachers make so that their learning objectives are accessible to all. This broader, more inclusive definition more accurately reflects current educational research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Hanley & Montgomery 2002, 2005).

This interpretation of curriculum also overlaps with methodology. Education researchers Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) note that teachers typically plan lessons based on desired outcomes—outcomes that may be established by the materials they choose—and then scaffold and sequence activities according to students' needs. Their method of assessment directly affects at which level of Bloom's Taxonomy students learn a subject, in other words, how complex the cognitive skill required for a given task is. The method of assessment affects how useful the results are to the teacher in guiding a student's future instruction, too. Thus, because student outcomes are tied to modes of instruction, curriculum involves not only the material used to teach a given skill, but also how the teacher supports the students through the learning process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

In their book for classroom teachers, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) explain how effective teachers should plan their curriculum. They base their model on the Tylerian Rationale, which prescribes a set of steps for curricular development similar to the scientific method: set objectives, design learning experiences, determine scope and sequence, and evaluate student learning (Bauer & Berg, 2001; Hanley & Montgomery, 2002). Darling-Hammond's and Bransford's (2005) curricular planning model reflects current practices in education by considering how individual students differ in their educational needs. First, teachers should organize the curriculum to teach the skills that they or the national education standards deem important. Next, goals should be appropriately scaled in specificity, since goals that are too narrow in focus may not result in transferable skills. Similarly, teachers should carefully select and sequence activities, giving attention to their particular students' prior knowledge and abilities. However, this sequence should not be so detailed that the teacher is inflexible regarding student needs. Finally, strategically designed formative and summative assessments (in-progress and final evaluations of student learning, respectively) inform the teaching and learning process by clarifying learning objectives and identifying areas for future improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Like many of the initial studies in the field, in the 1960s, music education research that examined curriculum was largely quantitative. In the effort to translate every element of musical activity into a quantifiable variable, researchers organized the musical curriculum around a set of synthetically constructed labels. These verbal concepts ostensibly led to deeper conceptual understanding but neglected to encapsulate the inherent properties of music. In other words, they were suitable for assessment

purposes but not for aesthetic ones. By assuming that most people will act in the same manner given a set of circumstances, this method excluded the subjective experiences of students (Hanley & Montgomery 2002, 2005).

Music education researchers began using qualitative research models such as case studies in the late 1980s. Today, they continue to use both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Despite the field's more comprehensive and numerous research methods, the first national music standards, adopted in 1994, still reflected a curriculum development approach centered around assessment rather than improving musical instruction (Conway, 2008). Only since the recent adoption of the 2014 National Core Music Standards has the policy focus shifted from "skills and knowledge" to "understanding" and "independence" (National Association for Music Educators," 2014).

Repertoire

Literature regarding repertoire focuses primarily on its function and the criteria one should consider when using certain selection strategies and resources. A cursory review of the literature found that the majority of practitioner journals and peer-reviewed publications explore the repertoire selection practices of music directors of ensembles at secondary and tertiary schools. Music educators and researchers agree that repertoire should be of good quality, and discuss form, rhythm, harmony, melody, register, ensemble needs, and orchestration as factors to consider when establishing a core repertoire (Abril, 2006; Apfelstadt, 2000; Bauer, 1996; Geraldi, 2008; Reynolds, 2000; Rosene, 2004; Sheldon, 2000). Most educators and researchers also value diversity in repertoire: diversity in style, duration, geography, composer, and historical

period (Apfelstadt, 2000; Bauer, 1996; Berenson, 2008; Geraldi, 2008; Hopkins, 2013; Rotjan, 2018; Woike, 1990). Awareness of the available repertoire is a critical component of the selection process, and practitioner journals as well as surveys list a number of resources for staying informed. These include colleagues, recordings and concerts, professional development events such as workshops and conventions, lists by state and national organizations, collections or compilations of pieces, online resources like music catalogues and social media platforms, and student input (Bauer, 1996, p. 6; Crochet, 2006, p. 65; Reynolds, 2000; Rotjan, 2018). Although many of the ideas and results expressed by the authors and participants may transfer to the studio setting, it should be noted that the needs of a student ensemble—such as performance expectations or ideal practice methods—do not align precisely with those of an individual student. As previously stated, there is a gap in the literature regarding these factors in the studio setting.

Reynolds (2000) argues that because repertoire has such a large impact on what students learn, that it *is* the curriculum. It conveys a musical philosophy and is the framework for students' musical and technical development (Apfelstadt, 2000; Bauer, 1996; McCallum, 2007; Reynolds, 2000; Rotjan, 2018; Sheldon, 2000). Similarly, band literature recommends that programming for concerts should reflect what educators want their students to accomplish long-term. That is, it should be part of a pedagogical vision or philosophy (Geraldi, 2008; Hopkins, 2013). Thus, like curricular development, quality programming depends on the intentional and cohesive sequencing of pieces. Pieces between concert cycles should be related conceptually so that students may transfer concepts to other pieces (Backes, 2010; Geraldi, 2008; McCallum, 2007). This

"spiral curriculum," as articulated by Jerome Bruner (1960), accelerates learning and promotes mastery, because learners develop skills based on existing knowledge and then repeatedly revisit them at increasingly higher levels of understanding. Simultaneously learning new repertoire and maintaining old repertoire may also increase student confidence during performances and provide opportunities to re-examine musical decisions (Berenson, 2008).

Additionally, concert programming should be attainable for students to learn during the concert cycle. Ensemble directors should select pieces difficult enough that students require a reasonable amount of guidance to reach their potential (Hopkins, 2013). However, repertoire should also be feasible enough that during performance they can attain flow, the feeling of deep concentration and control that produces an optimal, satisfying experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). According to psychologist Lev Vygotsky, the ideal region of difficulty lies between what students can learn independently and their potential educational growth under the direction of a knowledgeable teacher. This Zone of Proximal Development is as relevant to the studio setting as concert programming, since in applied music instruction, students typically learn assigned repertoire independently throughout the week and then collaborate with their teacher to achieve higher levels of performance during the lesson itself (Kennell, 1992). In sum, intentionally sequenced repertoire comprises a curriculum that reflects the teacher’s pedagogical philosophy and confers numerous educational and developmental benefits.

Challenges of Repertoire Selection

There is a broad consensus in the music education community that repertoire should facilitate a sequential acquisition of skills (ASTA, 2011; Bauer, 1996; Brittin & Sheldon, 2004; McCallum, 2007), since a key function of good repertoire is its ability to increase students' technical ability. Teachers may select repertoire not only because it features a new or emerging skill for students, but also because it meets state or national curricular standards, which are themselves graded and sequentially arranged (Apfelstadt, 2000; Hopkins, 2013; Rotjan, 2018). Assessing the difficulty of compositions and designing a balanced curriculum are therefore some of the main challenges of repertoire selection (Forrester, 2017).

Teachers believe that improving technical skills should not be the sole goal of repertoire and seek to provide opportunities for expression through meaningful musical experiences (Hopkins, 2013; McPhail, 2010; Rotjan, 2018; Sindberg, 2009). Equating increasing technical difficulty with increasing musical achievement neglects other aspects of musicianship, such as expressivity. Students may prefer to focus on expression and musicality, yet lack of technique may inhibit musical expression as the student advances. In fact, a key characteristic of excellent studio teaching is that repertoire is "well within [students'] technical capabilities, so that students can play with both expression and excellent fundamental tone" (Duke & Simmons, 2006, p. 11). Conversely, playing a series of technically demanding pieces may result in student frustration or diminished quality in overall performance (Geraldi, 2008; Hopkins, 2013; McPhail, 2010). McPhail (2010) cites this tension between the value that teachers place

on practice and technical ability and the value students find in performing and expression as a "major and continuing balancing act for teachers" (p. 40).

A large body of repertoire is only useful if teachers have the functional knowledge to make informed decisions: that is, effective teachers are familiar with the repertoire available to them (Byo, 1988; Chen, 2018; Woike, 1990). Citing the fact that human teaching and learning is less generalizable between domains than previously thought, education researcher Lee Shulman (1986, 1992) notes the need for subject-specific pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which he characterizes as the subject matter knowledge that teachers use in order to make a topic comprehensible to others. Adequate PCK translates to more effective teaching and learning because it supplies an understanding of what makes a topic easy or difficult—an essential component of repertoire selection (Grieser & Hendricks, 2018). Thus, musical PCK requires that teachers are knowledgeable of music teaching technique and effective implementation of the curriculum (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004).

Emerging qualitative and quantitative research suggests that preservice and in-service secondary school music teachers obtain PCK primarily from methods courses, and also from observations and student teaching (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Chen, 2018; Haston & Leon-Guerrero, 2008). These authors infer that teachers draw heavily from their own and other teachers' experiences to select repertoire and indicate that methods course curricula may need revision. Although these studies sampled and interviewed small populations of public school teachers, given curricular overlap in tertiary music programs, they may have similar implications for studio violin teachers. Moreover, since studio teaching requires no formal licensure, it is possible that many

studio teachers start teaching without any pedagogical knowledge other than their own, though little research supports this hypothesis.

Resources and Strategies

Research regarding the resources and strategies that band teachers use to choose repertoire is outdated and may not transfer to the studio setting. High school band directors ranked listening to publishers' promotional recordings, browsing at the music store, consulting the state repertoire list, listening to others' performances, and attending professional development events as their favored techniques for choosing music (Bauer, 1996). More recent studies confirm the utility of these techniques and add that consulting peer networks and locating music online are useful strategies (Chen, 2018; Crochet, 2006; Forrester, 2017). However, a survey of high school instrumental ensemble directors revealed different top influences on planning and implementing instruction: the directors' own experiences, available facilities and equipment, and their college ensemble conductor (Bauer & Berg, 2001). Moreover, in addition to its different body of repertoire, studio teaching is notably different from public school teaching in that the one-to-one setting offers few opportunities to share and identify effective teaching practices (Burwell et al., 2017; Carey, Grant, McWilliam, & Taylor, 2013; Gaunt, 2008). For example, when asked to share their teaching practices with their peers in a seminar format, faculty members at a conservatory all responded with an "emphatic 'no,'" because they believed that publicly sharing the strategies that they developed in private was "scary" or akin to revealing a "trade secret" (Purser, 2005, p. 296).

One of the core functions of professional music organizations is to support educators by providing curricular and pedagogical resources. Many music educators

and researchers advocate lists as helpful aids in the repertoire selection process (Chen, 2018; Geraldi, 2008; McCallum, 2007; Reynolds, 2000; Rosene, 2004). Yet, it is unclear to what extent music educators find these useful in practice. Lists published by professional organizations, music festivals, or teachers' own personal lists ranked very low as resources for repertoire (Bauer, 1996; Crochet, 2006). Survey respondents considered the influence of professional organizations only "sometimes" when planning their curriculum (Bauer & Berg, 2001, p. 57). These findings support the possible existence of a disconnect between institutionalized, formal knowledge and the knowledge teachers use in practice.

Student Perspectives

There is a notable lack of research that explores the outcomes tied to student-selected repertoire. Renwick and McPherson (2002) found in a single case study that student-selected repertoire resulted in the participant utilizing more effective practice strategies. The participant spent more time practicing and did so with more advanced practice strategies, including humming, silent fingering and analysis, tempo adjustment, and repetition of larger sections. Cultivating intrinsic motivation caused a meaningful and positive change in practice (Renwick & McPherson, 2002), which is consistent with the constructivist theory that allowing students to participate in repertoire selection increases their overall engagement (Scruggs, 2009). Motivational research not limited to music education strongly links student engagement and choice with higher-level cognitive functioning and enjoyment (Renwick & McPherson, 2002). Based on the content of frequently used band method books, Byo (1988) posits that familiar tunes serve two key functions: sustaining student interest and providing opportunities to

practice a variety of musical styles and phrasings. Thus, repertoire that students find interesting may positively impact educational outcomes.

Preliminary research indicates that teachers do consider student interests and opinions when planning their curriculum. A survey of British violin teachers found that they are strongly interested in knowing what their students want to achieve through violin study and that they are willing to compromise with students when their goals differ (Creech & Hallam, 2010). Secondary school band directors believe the defined quality of s*tudent appeal* and the undefined quality of *student interest* to be among the most important factors of repertoire selection (Chen, 2018, p. 55; Crochet, 2006, p. 71). Middle school band directors incorporate student feedback using several strategies: discussing the qualities or types of music students wished to play, letting students suggest specific compositions, and allowing students to choose from a list of compositions predetermined by the teacher (Chen, 2018, pp. 59-61), a strategy suggested by practitioner journals (Berenson, 2008; Scruggs, 2009). A similar, interview-based investigation of six band directors at secondary and tertiary institutions found that although directors valued student enjoyment and occasionally solicited their feedback, ensuring that the music was of high quality and served their educational goals took precedence over the aesthetic appeal that it held for students, audiences, and the directors themselves (Backes, 2010). In sum, though it appears that teachers strongly value student input and engagement, it is unclear to what extent they consider these factors when they conflict with their own educational goals.

Studio Teachers: Pedagogical Approaches and Influences

Carey, Bridgstock, Taylor, McWilliam & Grant (2013) identified two types of pedagogical approaches in their analysis of video-recorded, one-to-one lessons: *transfer pedagogy* and *transformative pedagogy*. Teachers who practice transfer pedagogy are assessment-oriented and favor performance outcomes rather than learning outcomes, whereas transformative pedagogy places emphasis on fostering student understanding at a deep level and increasing knowledge via scaffolding, collaboration, and contextualized learning (pp. 361-362). In addition, these teachers make extensive use of modeling and demonstration so that their students achieve well-defined notions of excellence (Carey & Grant, 2014). Furthermore, the 1994 National Standards for Music Education suggest the use of constructivist and inquiry-based pedagogical approaches, approaches that more closely align with the transformative model (Haston & Leon-Guerrero, 2008). More recently, the 2014 National Coalition for Core Arts Standards revised the 1994 standards to promote students' capacity to "generate creative ideas" and "relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding" (State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014, pp. 1-10). Preliminary evidence indicates both that students prefer the transformative approach and that it is more effective, since they feel mentored as a "musician, performer, and even as a person," whereas those taught by teachers who predominantly exhibited transfer-style characteristics felt mentored as performers only (Carey, Bridgestock, et al., 2013, p. 365; Carey & Grant, 2014). It should be noted that ongoing debate exists concerning the effectiveness and applicability of constructivist practices. Kirchener, Sweller, & Clark (2006) warn that the "minimally guided instruction is less

effective and less efficient" than more teacher-centered approaches, and the advantage of guidance only diminishes when learners have acquired enough prior knowledge to effectively direct their learning themselves (p. 75).

Surveys of studio instrumental and vocal teachers indicate that half to two-thirds of respondents do not have a specific pedagogical framework or teaching method (Creech & Hallam, 2010; Fredrickson, Geringer, & Pope, 2013; Fredrickson, Moore, & Gavin, 2013). Though teachers employ a wide variety of approaches, the lesson structure was "assumed to be universal" by teachers and most teachers did not significantly alter their lesson structure when personalizing their instruction (Gaunt, 2008, p. 226). However, an overwhelming majority of conservatory teachers believed that their studio curriculum was completely individualized (Fredrickson, Moore, & Gavin, 2013; Fredrickson & Pope, 2013).

Burwell et al. (2017) report that though in recent years more institutions offer programs of study for studio pedagogy, for most music majors, it remains optional. However, the vast majority of conservatory applied faculty believe that good technique requires training; consequently, they use lesson time to teach their students instructional techniques and direct them to relevant resources (Fredrickson, Moore, & Gavin, 2013). It also appears that former teachers are significant influences and resources for music educators (Carey & Grant, 2014; Daniel & Parkes, 2017; Forrester, 2017; Purser, 2005). As previously noted, one primary source of pedagogical knowledge is conservatory teachers' own experiences (Daniel & Parkes, 2017; Gaunt, 2008). Although teachers with and without formal pedagogy training cited previous instructors and their own experiences as significant influences on their teaching, those teachers who had more

advanced levels of pedagogy training ranked their training as a more important influence (Daniel & Parkes, 2017).

Gaps in the Literature

The one-to-one nature of the studio necessarily means that it is a difficult environment to study; researchers often describe studio teaching as taking place in an isolated setting (Burwell et al, 2017; Carey et al, 2013; Gaunt, 2008; McPhail, 2010). Surveys often garner low response rates that yield even smaller sample populations, and many of the studies based on interviews and focus groups worked with fewer than 10 participants. Daniel and Parkes (2017) note that instrumental music teachers in higher education are a population "notably difficult to engage in research studies" (p. 35). Persson (1994) distinguished between the distinct skill sets and roles of great pedagogues and great artists and made two propositions that may be useful in understanding this relative scarcity of research in one-to-one teaching. First, "[a]rt and music . . . tend to be fields of interest which are often left unchallenged by anyone who is not a member of the musical community by means of being a qualified musician." Second is the belief that the scientific nature of research is opposed to the artistic nature of music, and "its methods [pose] a potential threat to the individuality of a performing musician" (Persson, 1994, p. 89). Yet, the logistical difficulties of conducting research in the studio setting and the musical community's resistance to academic inquiry do not negate the need for empirical study; they only provide an explanation for the paucity of literature. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to bridge this gap in the literature by qualitatively investigating studio violin teachers' beliefs regarding repertoire selection.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

This study is an instrumental case study bounded by semi-structured interviews with 10 studio violin teachers about their repertoire selection practices. Since the topic is largely unstudied in the studio setting and merits further preliminary investigation, a qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative research focuses on holistically understanding the experiences and processes of the research topic rather than testing hypotheses, and its versatility therefore addresses these research questions more fully than a quantitative approach.

Rather than characterizing case study as a specific methodology, Stake (2005) defines case study as "a choice of what is to be studied," one that focuses on "experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts" (pp. 443-444). It is appropriate for descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory research (Farquhar, 2012). It is highly contextual in nature (Barrett, 2014) and is bounded by time, place, and the case being studied (Creswell, 1998). Barrett (2014) also notes a "proliferation" of definitions for a case study (p. 115). These definitions leave methodology open-ended and flexible to the needs of the researcher. Stake (2005) differentiates instrumental from intrinsic case studies by purpose. Unlike the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study "provide[s] insight into an issue" and does not study the case primarily to better understand that particular case (p. 445). The researcher still examines the case in depth, but the study serves a broader interest as well. Thus, the case of this study is the studio violin teachers as a collective, and the broader interest is their repertoire selection practices.

Music education has long employed the case study as a method of inquiry. The case study originated in the disciplines of sociology and psychology, which are disciplines that education has historically drawn upon for its research methods. The case study is also easily adaptable to a variety of musical contexts and may employ various scholarly orientations (e.g., ethnology, phenomenology). Perhaps most significantly, it conveys the complexities and nuances of teaching and music without reducing them to discrete variables (Barrett, 2014). In sum, the case study's broad application to a complex and unique phenomenon and its flexible methodology make this an ideal tradition of inquiry for exploring repertoire selection practices.

Like case studies, the semi-structured interview is also widely used in qualitative research. One of its primary advantages is that it is "sufficiently structured to address the specific topic related to the phenomenon of study, while leaving space for participants to offer new meanings to the study focus" (Galletta, 2013, p. 24). It simultaneously yields rich responses to the planned questions and allows the researcher to pursue new lines of inquiry as they arise during the interview. Conducting the semi-structured interviews by telephone was a practical alternative to in-person interviews, because the majority of the interviewees live outside of the researcher's geographic area.

Procedure

Participant recruitment

The advisors on my committee referred studio violin teachers to me as potential interview candidates based on several criteria. All participants taught primarily in a studio setting and had at least a decade of experience. They had taught or currently

teach students of varied ages and skill levels, from absolute beginners and toddlers to pre-college and university students playing professional-level repertoire.

Additionally, the following characteristics were not criteria for selection, but were nearly universal commonalities among the participants. Nine out of 10 participants had a master's degree in performance, music education, or pedagogy. Several had doctorates, and several had or were currently employed by university music departments or programs. Though teaching violin was the primary factor for participant selection, many interviewees taught viola in addition to violin and spoke about their experiences selecting repertoire for viola. The interviewees taught in different regions across the United States, although selection was not based on geographic diversity. Selection was also not based on gender, age, or race.

Seventeen potential candidates were contacted via email, and ten interviews were completed. After scheduling interviews, participants received the interview guide and consent script so that they could prepare. The University of Oregon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved obtaining verbal rather than written consent.

Interview Process

I formulated and revised the interview guide several times, from the submission of the research plan to the UO IRB in September 2018 through the week before the interviews took place. My initial draft of the interview guide was based on my research questions and suggestions from a music education faculty member. That winter, I also piloted the interview guide with two violin teachers. This provided an opportunity to see what kind of responses the questions garnered and to generate additional potential follow-up questions. Similarly, I revised questions after reading more of the literature

addressing repertoire selection and after receiving additional feedback from my advisors.

Interviews took place between January 10th and January 30th, 2019 via telephone, because almost all the interviewees resided in states outside my geographic location. They were scheduled at the interviewees' convenience and were intended to last between 30 and 40 minutes. The mean length of interviews was 37 minutes, no interview exceeded 46 minutes, and the shortest interview lasted 25 minutes.

I initiated all calls, except when interviewees requested we postpone the interview by a few minutes. I recorded every interview using TapeACall, an app that creates a three-way conference call to clearly record each side of the conversation. I called the unique virtual phone number associated with my account and then added and merged the interviewee's telephone line. This service then automatically saved the recordings for download and retrieval. To guard against technical difficulties, I also used an external recorder. An in-ear microphone connected to the external recorder picked up my voice and the interviewee's voice from the phone's speakers. These lower-quality audio files were not used to generate transcripts and only served as alternate recordings in case of technical problems with TapeACall.

I started each interview by reading the consent script and obtaining verbal consent. The interviewees were previously notified by email that they were being recorded from the start of the call. I then proceeded with the questions on the interview guide. Every interview began with the same demographic questions. These inquired about the length and type of the interviewees' pedagogical experiences, information about the demographics of the students in their studio, and their personal background

and educational philosophy. These questions contextualized the interviewees' responses for the following questions and provided a means for comparison among different interviews.

The remainder of the interview questions addressed the resources, constraints and pressures, factors, and specific repertoire involved in interviewees' repertoire selection processes. These included questions inspired by the literature regarding personalization, difficulty, and non-traditional repertoire. To further explore the outcomes teachers perceive as connected to repertoire choice, I also asked questions relating to how their repertoire selection processes changed over time, if at all. I adapted the order of the questions considerably across interviews as I became more experienced with interviewing and the types of responses the questions elicited. I would often ask a question out of order if the interviewee had brought up a topic related to the question, and follow-up questions likewise interrupted the order of the interview guide. When appropriate, I used the end of the interview to ask follow-up questions that would have otherwise interrupted the interview had they been asked in the moment. At the end of almost all the interviews, I left time for the interviewee to make additional comments and to elaborate on anything they felt was not addressed by the previous questions. Some participants chose to end the interviews without making additional comments.

Treatment, Analysis, and Synthesis of the Data

Within 48 hours of conducting each interview, I began transcribing and made notes on emerging themes. This allowed me to reflect on what was said and to better prepare for the following interviews. I then uploaded the audio files into the artificial

intelligence transcription platform Trint, which generated preliminary transcripts. Next, I reviewed the audio and corrected the transcripts.

All digital recordings and transcripts were stored securely in Google Drive and on a password-protected laptop. TapeACall servers retain recordings for one year following the recording date, but all recordings were deleted from its servers after being downloaded (TelTech, 2018). Recordings on the external recorder did not contain any identifying information. Access to transcripts and recordings stored on the Trint platform is limited to the account holder (Trint, n.d.).

I began my data analysis by rereading the transcripts and writing my initial thoughts. For each transcript, I wrote a summary of how I initially thought the interviewee's responses answered my research questions, selected especially striking excerpts, and noted any questions or categories that arose. Writing these memos helped me to keep track of my thought process between interview transcripts and kept me grounded in my research questions before I broke down the data further during the coding process.

Next, I coded the interviews by hand on de-identified paper copies of the transcripts. Initial coding primarily employed In vivo and Process codes. Initial coding is an ideal first cycle method, since it allows the researcher to remain open to the many possible themes that may emerge from the data. It consists of breaking down the data, in this case the transcripts, and examining them for similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2009, p. 81). Process codes use gerunds to describe the data. They are appropriate for qualitative studies, especially those that search for "ongoing action / interaction / emotion taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching

a goal or handling a problem" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 96-97). In vivo codes help retain the participants' voices and meanings using their own words as the codes (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). The two types of codes balance the perspectives of the researcher and the participants.

Coding is an iterative process. I kept a comprehensive code book and files specific to each interviewee. Many codes had working definitions, and I reviewed and revised codes for consistency as I completed each transcript. I also noted initial thoughts regarding how codes might relate to each other. Codes that had similar meanings, especially In vivo codes, were consolidated in order to keep the number of codes manageable. Additionally, I coded larger segments of the data when it was clear that the interviewee's words did not address the research questions. I also coded multiple sentences when the meaning would have been unclear or altered if the sentence had been isolated from those surrounding it. Finally, as I coded, I continued to add additional thoughts and questions to the summary documents.

After coding, I created digital flip charts for each code or code group. As described by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), these digital flip charts are a way of organizing quotations by their assigned codes. Each flip chart contained the name of the code or code group, its description and subordinate codes, and the quotations themselves. I then reviewed the charts for inconsistencies and either moved quotations to another chart or split charts into multiple charts. Everything coded as unrelated to my research questions was contained in another chart, which I reviewed for patterns I had previously missed.

I used several strategies outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008) for data synthesis. During this process, I referred mostly to the quotations on the flip charts but also referenced the original transcripts when necessary. I continued to ask questions to better understand repertoire selection from different perspectives. I questioned temporal aspects such as frequency, duration, and timing of the interviewees' stated actions; the significance, consequence, and relationships among statements and actions; and the various meanings of the interviewees' words. The Conditional/Consequential Matrix helped me contextualize interactions within larger societal structures (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 94). These might include any organization, school, or community that may have influenced the teacher and student. Though these were not the only ways I thought about data synthesis, these formalized analytical tools were helpful as a novice researcher.

Ethical Considerations

The UO IRB reviewed and determined this research exempt. This indicates that the research poses no greater than minimal risk according to the exempt categories of research specified by federal regulations (University of Oregon, n.d.). I provided the consent script to all participants prior to their interviews and ensured that they had the opportunity to ask questions or request further information at all stages of their participation.

I strived to retain as much of the interviewees' original content as possible while still producing comprehensible transcripts that maintained their privacy. Proper nouns, such as the cities in which participants lived and the educational institutions they attended, are redacted in the transcripts, and pseudonyms replace the participants' real

names. Revisions were mostly stylistic and for the sake of clarity. Interviewees were given the opportunity to review their own transcript and its identifying information for accuracy. Revisions to the transcripts that occurred during the coding process did not meaningfully alter the transcripts.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this research was to describe the repertoire selection process of studio violin teachers and the outcomes they believed were connected to their repertoire choices. This chapter will first present a summary of the teachers' backgrounds. Results will be divided by research question into four categories: factors, constraints and pressures, resources, and outcomes.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Teacher	*State*	*Highest level of education attained*	*Experience (in years)*	*Average number of students in studio*	*Range: Number of students*	*Range: Student age*	*Studio setting notes*
Ashley	TX	D	12	35	10-70	3-18	Works in a middle school.
Bryan	TX	n.d.a.	45	8-10	8-22	3-college	
Diane	OH	M	30*	27	12-30	3-adult; typically K-college	College instructor; extensive chamber music and team teaching.
Erin	TX	D**	25*	20	12-60	4-18	Middle school teacher.
Grace	WI	M	18*	35-36	10-?	4-adults; typically K-12 students	Works in public school system.
Ken	OR	M	27*	30	3-varies widely	5-adult	University instructor and private studio.
Louisa	TX	D	18*	25-30	4-53	4-65	Teaches as part of a Suzuki school; works in public school system.
Melanie	AZ	M	28	20	10-30	4-60s, typically K-college	University instructor.
Raul	CT	D	12-13*	34	4-36; typically 24-30	4-50	
Thomas	TX	M	20*	20 hours of teaching/week	15-25	5-18	

Note. *indicates that this number includes teaching in college

M=Master's; D=Doctorate; D**=Doctoral candidate; n.d.a.= no data available, attended college

Participant Background

All participants were selected based on their experience teaching violin students of differing ages and levels of ability in the studio setting. Still, diversity within the participant population is reflected by their level of education, years of experience, and the context in which they teach.

Nine out of 10 teachers attained at least a master's degree in either performance or music education, and almost half have Doctors of Musical Arts in performance with secondary studies in pedagogy. Bryan attended college but did not specify the highest level of college he attained. However, given that he has experience teaching at several colleges, it is reasonable to assume he has at least a master's degree. Diane, Raul, and Thomas earned degrees in viola performance, and, including Ashley and Louisa, all reported teaching viola in addition to violin. Bryan and Grace also cited their post-college studies with violinists Almita and Roland Vamos and David Wolfe, respectively, as highly influential to their teaching. Notably, Ashley and Raul credited graduate school as initiating their desire to pursue teaching as a career.

The Suzuki method is a pedagogical philosophy and curriculum that develops technique in a sequential manner through the repertoire. It promotes beginning music education at a young age, and emphasizes repetition, listening to recordings, parental involvement, and group instruction in addition to individual instruction (Suzuki Association of the Americas, n.d. -a). Ashley, Erin, Ken, and Melanie grew up as Suzuki students, and Ashley, Bryan, Louisa, Raul, and Thomas each discussed doing Suzuki book training at a range of book levels, either as part of a graduate program, at a summer institute or workshop, or at a long-term program. Bryan is a Teacher Trainer

for Suzuki in the Schools. All participants have familiarity with Suzuki, and many now identify as being primarily Suzuki teachers.

Participants said that the size of their studios varied widely due to school and work commitments as well as job changes. Many also spent time establishing their studios and had the fewest number of students while they were completing their degrees. The age of their students also varied widely. Though all teachers said that they had previously started beginning violinists, the college instructors and most experienced teachers—Ken, Melanie, and Diane—rarely do so anymore. Likewise, several teachers worked primarily with school-aged children and college students.

As a group, participants were active in the professional music education community. Several teachers reported attending conferences like ASTA, and Raul recently presented at a conference on supplemental repertoire for violists. Ken is an ASTACAP examiner, and Diane compiled a viola repertoire list for an ASTA pedagogy publication. She also served as president of her state string teachers association and was the liaison for the studio teachers committee and the committee that later became ASTA's Alternative Styles committee.

The teachers worked in a variety of contexts and capacities. Five teachers—Ashley, Bryan, Erin, Louisa, and Thomas—taught in Texas, where private teachers can teach in the public schools during and after school. In addition to maintaining her own studio, Erin is a middle school teacher, and Ashley, Louisa, and Bryan also worked in the public school system. These teachers characterized Texas as having a robust and competitive music scene for which advanced etudes and concertos are required for solo and ensemble competitions and regional and state orchestras. Raul also characterized

his area of Connecticut as "saturated" with high-quality teachers and students wishing to participate in state and regional competitions. It should be noted that there is no data readily available regarding the number of teachers or competitions in these states relative to those in other states. In contrast, Grace described the public school system in which she worked as "not terribly keen on taking care of music." Additionally, four teachers taught students as part of an institution, either a college or university, or in Louisa's case, as part of a Suzuki academy that belongs to a parent organization. Some of the Suzuki studio teachers also taught group classes. Hence, though the teachers all worked in a one-to-one setting, they also had to meet the expectations set by the programs at their institutions.

Factors

There was overwhelming agreement among teachers that technique—both the technique required by repertoire and a student's technical ability—was a significant factor in repertoire selection. For many teachers, an evaluation of how the technical difficulty of the repertoire complemented past and planned future repertoire was an important consideration. Every teacher identified a core repertoire that either should be played or that they themselves used. As defined in the key terminology of this thesis, core repertoire refers to the body of violin literature deemed fundamental and essential by studio violin teachers as it manifests in both their individual studios and the violin teaching community at large. Therefore, whether a given piece belonged to this set of works was a factor in itself. Generally, teachers choose repertoire that they believed appealed to and motivated their students. They wanted their students to feel successful and to be able to give high-quality performances. The potential for their students'

growth as musicians and their expressive ability, stylistic awareness, self-awareness, and maturity level were explicitly identified as factors by three or fewer teachers. Repertoire was also selected with competitions and audition guidelines or potential performance opportunities in mind.

Core Repertoire

Every teacher identified the Suzuki repertoire as their core repertoire or said that they want their students to learn certain pieces. Ashley said she always teaches the first two Suzuki books, and Erin, Bryan, Grace, Louisa, Melanie, and Thomas all reported largely following the Suzuki repertoire until their students reach Book Five or later. Diane, Ken, Louisa, and Melanie said that they feel or used to feel that some pieces were obligatory, or as Melanie said, "mandatory rites of passage," although, Ken stressed that the path through that repertoire would be different for every student, depending on "how far" they went with the violin. Diane expressed the need for her students to have exposure to certain repertoire depending on their level—the repertoire an undergraduate student should be able to teach or take to an audition, for example. While neither Melanie nor Thomas reported keeping repertoire lists, they did discuss carefully considered and consistent curricula for their advanced students. These contain works by composers from diverse classical music eras. Thomas described his and his wife's progression:

> We cycle through Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern. So the Bach [Concerto in A Minor] would be the Baroque, and after that everybody learns the Haydn G Major Concerto. And then Romantic, almost everyone learns the de Beriot Concerto in A Minor, the first moment. And then for Modern, almost everybody learns the Bartok Romanian Dances. And then from there, after that, we introduce the Solo Sonatas and Partitas…. So I don't want to say everybody has to play

> anything after that, but from there we branched off into some other solo sonatas. And then everybody plays one of the Mozart concertos, either Three, Four, Five. And if they're still with us after that, usually Bruch or Lalo Concerto and Kabalevsky for the Modern piece.

Melanie and Thomas were careful to note that not everybody in their studio plays the exact same repertoire. However, these teachers did tend to favor works by the same set of composers.

As indicated by Table 2, five teachers phrased the factors they looked for as questions. These broadly fall into the categories of technical context, technical growth, musicianship, and situational context.

Table 2. Major Factors of Repertoire Selection

Technical Context	*Technical Growth*	*Musicianship*	*Situational Context*
• How does it relate to the pieces they've already played? (G) • How much harder is it? How much easier is it in some places? (G) • So, what was studied before? (M) • What do you have in mind for the student afterwards? (M)	• Is the technique accessible or something I want them to develop? (R) • Does it add to technical abilities? (T) • What other skills are there? (G) • Can I use this piece to introduce a technique or to work on a technique that somehow they haven't yet conquered? (R)	• What's now going to push their level in listening skills? (D) • Will this help them develop their musicality? (R) • Most important is, how does it contribute to their development as a musician? (T) • Does it add to…musicianship? (T)	• And then for the pre-college, what repertoire do you need before you get into college? (D) • What repertoire should you have at least some exposure to prior to going into an orchestra or something? (D) • Do they have any contests or anything else coming up or recitals coming up that they need to learn specific repertoire for? (T)

Note. The teachers in the above table—Diane, Grace, Melanie, Raul, and Thomas—are identified by their first initial in parentheses following their statement.

Technique

The technique required for a piece was a key factor for every teacher. Raul said that his "biggest considerations are the technique involved," and Ken regarded where students were in their technical development as a "very important guide" for choosing repertoire. As Table 2 indicates, teachers also considered the technical context of the piece—how its difficulty related to previous and future repertoire. They strived to pick repertoire that fit into a sequence of technical development, such as the Suzuki repertoire. Ashley, Grace, Ken, and Melanie also said they chose repertoire in order to reinforce a technique or to "fill the gaps" in overall technical development. For example, Grace remarked that though two of her students were successfully working through Bach's Concerto in A minor, their individual needs necessitate different repertoire going forward. One student will advance to a more melodic piece to develop vibrato and a more beautiful tone, whereas the other will likely play a "heavy" concerto to improve their ability to phrase difficult passages with a "clean" bow and rapid finger work. Half of the teachers also described looking for "successful alternatives." When searching for new repertoire, Ken said that he looks for multiple pieces that cultivate the same skills, and then he allows his students to choose from them. Similarly, Melanie, Thomas, and Raul reported searching for different pieces that teach the same skill if they perceive that their students detest a piece or do not engage with it.

Furthermore, Ashley, Bryan, Diane, Erin, Grace, Louisa and Melanie each discussed the importance of students feeling and being successful in relation to the technical difficulty of the repertoire. According to Bryan and Grace, it should be "within their grasp" or their "accessible range" within a few months. Diane, Erin, and

Louisa did not want their students to struggle or become frustrated or discouraged. Repertoire should challenge them, but, as Diane said, not to the extent that it would "deter them from enjoying playing." Like Louisa, Melanie believed that teachers should not "withhold standards for a certain ability level." Consequently, they often chose pieces that were below their students' technical ability to ensure that their students could take pride in their work and give quality performances.

Enjoyment and Aesthetic Appeal

Some teachers explicitly identified students' interest in a piece as a significant factor for repertoire selection, whereas others made statements that implied that student enjoyment was a goal or consideration. According to Ken, it was "obviously…very helpful" when students liked their repertoire. Ashley said, "I try and get within that idea that I want them to love the music, especially when they're older and they really start to get an opinion about music. I choose repertoire that hopefully they will really like." Enjoyment was central to her teaching philosophy. Melanie connected interest and motivation to each other and said that they were always considerations. If a student loved a piece, they would place it on a repertoire list for future study. Louisa, who firmly believed that repertoire should be well within students' technical capabilities, knew from personal experience that a desire to play specific pieces can motivate students to work hard; the intensity of their interest is thus a significant factor. Enjoyment was Raul's second most important factor after technical ability, and like Bryan, Ken, and Thomas, he was less likely to give students a particular piece if it did not appeal to him as a teacher. While Erin did not explicitly list student interest as a

factor, she did sing lyrics to fingerboard exercises and teach fiddle tunes because she thought they were fun for her beginners.

Situational Context

Four teachers—Bryan, Erin, Ken, and Melanie—said that they considered the social implications of the repertoire they chose. Ken expressed the belief that pieces which foster "a sense of competitiveness" in students can motivate them in a healthy way. Erin mentioned trying to give all her students a fiddle piece, so that everyone in her studio would have similar musical experiences and no one would feel left out. Bryan said he is aware of his students' peer groups and considered whether his students fit in socially, such as when they warm up in orchestra using their studio repertoire. Melanie strived to diversify the repertoire in her studio; she said that not everyone plays the same movement of solo Bach or the same Mozart concerto, for instance. At the same time, she acknowledged the need to maintain continuity with Suzuki summer camps and other activities affiliated with the larger Suzuki community. For this reason, she felt it necessary to prescribe a more uniform set of pieces for her younger students who were in the university's Suzuki program.

Three teachers expressed a desire to prepare students for musical opportunities that may arise. Diane said she typically teaches all her pre-college students as if they intend to pursue music in college. She wants them to be prepared to continue their violin studies, even if they decide to do so their senior year of high school. Ashley noted the importance of ensuring that her middle and high school students learn repertoire that permits them to participate in regional and state solo and ensemble competitions, or any competitions that are "here in town." Likewise, Bryan mentioned teaching repertoire of

different and contrasting styles and eras to fulfill music club contest and college application requirements. Finally, Raul said that when he assigned repertoire, he employed a "two-pronged approach" based on its function: repertoire for contests, recitals, and auditions exhibited students' strengths, whereas technical work inherently necessitated focusing on students' areas for improvement.

Constraints and Pressures

There were several commonalities between the items teachers identified as factors and constraints or pressures for their repertoire selection, so much so that one participant, Ken, said that he believed constraints and factors to be nearly the same. Teachers listed their own time and professional development, student time, and requirements for auditions and competitions as significant constraints on their repertoire choice. In the most extreme cases, they felt they had to "teach to the test," as Diane stated, or alternatively, that requirements for participating in certain ensembles or contests limited the repertoire their students could play. Several mentioned parents as a pressure, though ultimately parents did not usually affect teachers' choices. Since the majority of teachers taught in states with robust musical communities, repertoire's difficulty remained a significant factor and constraint. The interest and aesthetic appeal that repertoire held for teachers and students was an additional area of overlap between factors and constraints.

Teaching Context

Bryan, Erin, Louisa, and Thomas believed that teaching in Texas negatively impacted their freedom to select repertoire, though Ashley did not express an opinion

on the matter. The four teachers frequently stated that Texas was a very competitive state, with large music programs in the public schools in which private teachers could teach during and after the school day. Whether their students had enough time to prepare for contests in addition to their private lesson demands was an especially significant consideration for Thomas. Erin readily cited teaching in the state as the principal constraint for repertoire choice:

> So, I would say the biggest thing: Texas is a very different state. I'm not from here, so it was a bit of a shock. They very much like students to play repertoire that you would never think of giving them.

She emphasized that several of the Class One solos and etudes were pieces that she did not play until attending college. These solos are determined by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) list, a prescribed music list compiled by the inter-school organization that governs extracurricular activities in Texas. Erin continued:

> But I go with it, because I don't want them to lose interest. I know they really want to. And I'll teach them, and they'll get successful at it. I just, sometimes a whole month will be dedicated to an etude, and I feel like it slows down the process because we're so focused on that etude. So that's one thing that I find a little frustrating here. At the same time, it's cool because then they got to play this really cool etude or this really cool excerpt. So I guess it's a catch-22.

Likewise, Bryan said that "huge chunks" of lesson time were devoted to this repertoire, and Thomas was candid about the fact that his high school students might spend an entire school semester preparing music for solo, ensemble, and private contests. Although Bryan said that the UIL list was not quite "confining," since it was a comprehensive list, it still limited his choices for the state solo contest. For example, Louisa said that one of her repertoire selection strategies was winnowing her students' choice of solos to the five easiest pieces on the UIL list. However, without these

contests, teachers said they may not have otherwise devoted lesson time to the requisite etudes and orchestral excerpts. Finally, Thomas did note that at the middle school level, these requirements were less demanding.

Raul also indicated that audition requirements constrained his repertoire choices. The Connecticut State Music Educators Association publishes the repertoire four years in advance of the annual festival, which allows Raul to plan his repertoire well ahead of time. He explains:

> So, I can take a look [at] who is in my studio right now, that is either in high school or will be in high school for the next four years, and start planning their development towards that as well…. Whether I agree that there's a purpose to the student to play their repertoire or not is almost secondary.

Raul said that occasionally students said that they did not like a certain piece; however, since it was required for the All-State audition, he told his students that they had to learn it or simply forgo participation. Raul continues:

> But I'm also aware that that could be the case in which my student would want to leave my studio for that, as I live in an area that's saturated with high-quality teachers, and many teachers that would just do what the student wants.

Thus, Raul's repertoire choices are influenced and constrained by the state repertoire list in the short- and long-term.

Melanie listed two primary constraints and pressures: degree requirements and audition requirements. As in Texas, the Arizona musical community routinely expects highly difficult repertoire. Melanie explains:

> Sometimes with pre-college kids, the requirements for what students are able to play, for instance on All-State audition can feel like a constraint, because there's a specific list of I don't know 25 works that they can use for that. And it includes the Sibelius Concerto, the Brahms Concerto, the Tchaikovsky Concerto…. It's sort of a ridiculous list and doesn't include

> some of the meat and potatoes, you know, early collegiate repertoire that I would might otherwise choose for that.

She also said she feels pressured by the repertoire requirements for the upper-division, barrier jury that permits entry into the music major. Sometimes the requirements do not align with her students' abilities, so she may ask the department to grant an exception in favor of a less difficult piece—a Telemann Fantasy instead of a movement of solo Bach, for example. Although in this case the department allowed the alternate piece, Melanie's students' degree requirements pressure her to choose repertoire that she would not choose in ideal circumstances.

Louisa teaches at a Suzuki academy that has a strict graduation process. Every student must perform an entire Suzuki volume in order to advance to the next volume. This performance is then recorded and sent to the academy director in Los Angeles for approval. Although Louisa believed in the value of this graduation process, she did acknowledge that at times it could be unmotivating for the student if they struggled with memorization, particularly in volumes with many concertos. She stated plainly, "They just can't get through it."

Teacher Interest and Professional Development

Bryan, Grace, Ken, and Thomas also all stated that they may not teach certain repertoire, because they had taught it several times before and became bored with it or because they did not like it. Regarding the Accolay Violin Concerto, Bryan stated, "I just don't teach it anymore, because I just don't think it's very good music…. I just don't find it interesting anymore." He generally does not teach pieces he does not like. Thomas, when asked which pieces he never taught, said he was "usually Handel-ed out" by the time students reached Handel Sonata No. 1 in Suzuki Book Seven. He would

likely only teach it if a student asked. Thomas said he usually starts departing from the Suzuki repertoire in Books Seven and Eight in order to explore music from other periods and to pursue his and his students' other interests, and Grace said she was "really sick" of Baroque and Classical music at about Suzuki Books Five and Six. Similarly, Ken identified boredom as one reason he seeks out new repertoire. He may know that a piece teaches a particular skill well, but teaching it so frequently incentivizes him to search for other repertoire that fulfills the same purpose.

Bryan and Louisa also identified their lack of time for professional development as limiting their ability to introduce new repertoire into their studio. Bryan stated that he typically does not teach repertoire he has not played himself, because he believes that "the kid doesn't have time for [him] to learn how to teach it." This was not true for his first few decades as a studio teacher, but the repertoire he currently teaches has remained relatively unchanged over the last 10-15 years. Additionally, Louisa said that because of her obligations during graduate school, she did not have time to explore outside of the canon of expected repertoire at that time.

Grace believed that experience was the primary reason she had not explored repertoire unfamiliar to her. She emphasized how excited she was to start looking at new repertoire and how beneficial it could be for her students. Due to many relocations, Grace established a new studio several times and consequently does not have extensive experience with upper-intermediate and advanced violin students. Additionally, working other jobs limited her time to learn new repertoire and to observe and collaborate with other teachers. Despite this, Grace is satisfied with the Suzuki books for beginning and less advanced students. She explained:

> [T]he truth of the matter is: I have been sort of stuck in my own little work bubble, and it hasn't changed much. And my students are doing well, and so I don't feel a lot of pressure to change it.

Grace strongly believes that evolving is good for the "human soul" and that delving into new material would be good for her as a teacher. However, since Grace knows that the repertoire and her way of teaching it is effective, she does not feel a need to look elsewhere.

Grace also discussed the disadvantages of knowing the Suzuki repertoire at such a deep level:

> I haven't played much repertoire that is relevant to my students outside of the Suzuki repertoire, so I'm not exactly sure where to start. Which sounds really dumb, because I've been teaching a really long time. But, it's kind of daunting to sort of go, 'Okay, well let's open this piece of music and see what it does and what it doesn't.' And to try something new with the student is kind of scary when I know something else works. You know, and to give them something that I don't know the whole piece inside and out and I can tell by their question in a text what measure they're in and how to help them.

Because of her experience primarily as a Suzuki teacher, Grace said she can anticipate in which measures her students will struggle. Yet, she also speculates that she "preemptively expects something to be hard" that might not be had she not expected it. Her students "might just be able to do it," to "go for it."

Diane and Raul also discussed experience as a limiting factor, but not necessarily a constraint on their repertoire choice. As a violist, Raul did not play many of the student violin pieces commonly learned by violin teachers. However, he does not view this as "much of a hindrance," since he believes that he can teach a piece provided that he has a good understanding of the techniques needed for the piece, access to recordings, and adequate score study. Diane expressed a similar sentiment when recounting an anecdote about teaching the Barber Violin Concerto. She had never

taught it before, so she asked the pedagogue Almita Vamos for advice—her thoughts, possible fingerings, and ideal bowings for the piece. Vamos told her to follow her instincts as a musician. Diane now believes that a teacher should use the knowledge they have, assess what they lack, and seek input from other performers and teachers. She said she teaches pieces she has never learned herself quite frequently.

Raul said that the expectation of a certain level of repertoire by other teachers led him to choose and adapt a more obscure piece so that his student could successfully audition into her youth symphony. The youth symphony expected its members to play at a Suzuki Book Four level, and although his student was capable of participating in that ensemble, she had only completed most of Book Three. Raul explained:

> "[I]f you send her playing a late Book Three piece, she may or may not be placed in that group that will be more age appropriate to her and that she does have the technique to be in that group. If you send her with a piece from the Barbara Barber series, a teacher or someone in the community might know that piece and think, "Oh, this is a Book Three level piece."

Raul adapted the fingerings of the piece to create more opportunities to shift—moving the hand into a different position on the fingerboard—thereby showing the conductor the necessary technical skills for the ensemble. He felt pressured by the audition expectations and believed that the other teacher's familiarity with the Suzuki and Barbara Barber repertoire was a hindrance to his student's success, albeit one that he could creatively circumvent.

"Not My Forte"

Several teachers did not teach a certain type of repertoire because they were not interested in that type of music or did not feel adequately qualified to teach it. Bryan

said that he did not teach non-traditional music, specifically fiddle and country western music, because he thinks he sounds neither authentic nor "good doing it." Melanie also declined to teach what ASTA terms "alternative styles," because of her lack of interest and ability in that area. Ashley did not teach non-traditional music, because she believes her role in the teaching community is to lay a good musical foundation for beginning through upper intermediate-level students upon which their next teacher can build. She does not teach higher-level or adult students for the same reason; it's not her forte.

Ashley, Bryan, Louisa, and Thomas refer their students to other teachers for repertoire that they do not feel comfortable or interested in teaching. Bryan said that he has students who take lessons from other teachers, and Thomas said that if the young fiddler he taught were to advance in that style, he would refer him to someone more adept at it. Ashley has a good friend and fellow violin teacher to whom she recommends her students when they reach more advanced repertoire—which she describes as repertoire more difficult than the Bach A Minor Concerto. Louisa, who is primarily a violinist, predicted that she would transfer her young viola student to someone with more expertise at the end of this year. It is important to note that these teachers did not characterize not teaching a certain type of repertoire as a deficiency or a constraint, though their personal interests and skill sets did limit the repertoire they chose to teach.

Students' Lack of Time

Ashley, Bryan, Diane, Ken, Melanie, and Thomas all cited students' lack of time to practice as a constraint on their repertoire choice. Bryan realized that one of the reasons he has "pare[d] down the core" of repertoire he teaches is that his current students have much more demanding schoolwork than his students did twenty years

ago. Thomas remarked that due to state and regional contests and auditions, he plans "less heavy" repertoire in the fall and increases its difficulty during the springtime. Ashley and Melanie discussed competing extracurricular activities, like a school play, summer vacation, and orchestra, as other obligations that require significant student time. Ashley specified sixth grade as the moment when students' practice time decreased "dramatically," and like Bryan, she strived to choose "literature that will get them into the next place technique-wise in the least amount of steps." Diane expected her violinists and violists to learn both instruments, yet she found it more challenging for her college students to meet this goal due to their other degree requirements. Ken thought that students may have "distractions" in their lives and raised time management as an issue. He also noted that although repertoire may be a good fit for a student, sometimes the student may have other challenges in their lives and cannot be "energized [into] spending time with their instrument." Every teacher either adapted their repertoire choices in order to accommodate changes in students' schedules as they arose, or they anticipated this constraint and integrated it into their regular studio practices.

Student and Teacher Disagreement

When students and teachers disagreed about the repertoire the student was playing, teachers would adopt a different approach and explain their rationale. Often, the repertoire itself would not change. Erin said she explained her Suzuki-based philosophy and the value of a stepwise method, which she believes helps her students connect the skills of their current piece to their next one. Ken said he devotes a few lessons to a piece and tries to inspire his students with different recordings and an

explanation of its historical context and its importance. Ashley and Grace said that their students understood that they had to learn a specific skill from a piece before they could progress to different, potentially more likable repertoire. If Grace's students could demonstrate that they had learned the requisite skills through select passages of the disliked piece, then they could discuss other repertoire.

However, Grace, Ken, and Raul also highlighted the bond of trust and respect they shared with their students. As a result, they perceived that they and their students rarely disagreed with their repertoire choices. Ken stated:

> Usually by the time the student has had several repertoire suggestions from me, they see that it's a journey with each piece and each learning experience. And they trust that process, and they know that it may not be the journey that they're aware of what it's going to be in the beginning, but they trust in it, and they find the enjoyment as they go.

Grace and Ashley commented that the young age of their students limited their disagreement. Raul and Thomas reported that they never had students vocalize their disagreement. In addition to soliciting student input, they believed that their own sense of the repertoire students liked that was also within their technical capabilities curbed any repertoire conflict. Only Louisa said that her students "usually win" in the case that the student wanted to play repertoire she would not have chosen, although both she and Raul said that they would not teach students pieces unreasonable for their technical abilities. For every teacher, communication and their relationship with the individual student helped them limit or overcome areas of disagreement.

Parent Pressures

Ken explicitly identified parents as a pressure. When parents tried to influence repertoire, he "very infrequently" allowed it to influence his decisions, although parents

did serve as a good gauge of how his students were feeling and what motivated them. However, he also said, "…when a parent is suggesting repertoire for the sake of competitiveness or one-upping another student, I see that as highly inappropriate. I don't engage in those conversations." Instead, he will explain that the piece is "out of the spectrum of what [the student] needs to be working on now," and asks them to create a wish list that they can revisit when the time is right.

Bryan and Diane also discussed the importance of their relationships with their students' parents. Diane said that she had not had a parent pressure her about repertoire for years, though she often had to negotiate with parents regarding what they thought their children should be doing. About 20 years ago, the father of one of her students informed her that he thought learning through review—a core part of the Suzuki philosophy—was unnecessary. Diane concluded, "They've got to trust the teacher. I mean, I have two master's [degrees]." For Diane, communication and respect were fundamental to her work as a musician and educator. Similarly, Bryan credited his good rapport with parents for his curricular freedom, saying that "they leave [repertoire selection] pretty much up to [him]." In sum, while several teachers mentioned parents as a potential pressure, it seems that parents do not ultimately affect the teachers' repertoire choice.

Resources

When asked what resources she used and accessed when selecting repertoire, Louisa said that, "I think people are the best resources." Teachers reported exchanging ideas with their colleagues at organized events—conferences, masterclasses, and trainings—as well as asking advice from other local teachers and former classmates and

friends. In addition to seeking out new repertoire on their own, they said that new repertoire entered their studios when their students asked to play a certain piece and an audition or competition required a certain piece. Half of the teachers interviewed compiled their own repertoire lists, which were often a combination of other published lists and knowledge that they had acquired from previous teachers, trainings, and their degree program. Every teacher interviewed said they refer to collections or published repertoire lists, though it is unclear how often they use them. Listening to live performances and recordings also inspired teachers to introduce new repertoire into their studios, and several teachers said that they continuously seek new repertoire for their students.

Peer Networks

Every teacher said that discussing and collaborating with other teachers was a resource for repertoire, particularly for repertoire they had never previously learned themselves. Erin, Ken, and Melanie mentioned conferences and masterclasses. Raul said he trades scores and repertoire ideas with a close friend from his master's program, and Erin remarked that she and her former classmates are "always talking" and "always sharing." Louisa brought up a teacher Facebook group and an online discussion board connected to the Suzuki Association, and Grace said she asks advice from her husband, who is also a violin teacher. Diane noted that she frequently team-teaches, so she coordinates her curricular goals with other teachers. Additionally, teachers often mentioned consulting their colleagues with a certain goal in mind; they asked for recommendations for pieces that addressed a specific technique.

Ashley, Bryan, Ken, and Thomas also discussed how their observations of other teachers impacted their own teaching, both generally and regarding their repertoire selection process. Bryan said that he had worked with approximately 20 or 25 Suzuki teacher trainers. He believed that comparing his teaching with the instruction he observed and its real-time outcomes was deeply influential to his own teaching. Ashley and Thomas repeatedly asserted that watching the instruction of advanced players offered them new insights into both the repertoire that they chose and the details they decided to focus on regarding that repertoire.

Students Introducing New Repertoire into the Studio

Teachers indicated that they teach new repertoire because their students ask to learn certain pieces or because an audition requires them. Three of the Texas teachers—Bryan, Erin, and Louisa—said that the repertoire required by the state solo and ensemble contests was sometimes unfamiliar, especially the etudes. Louisa and Diane also said that their students bring in orchestral repertoire that they had not played in the past. Melanie reported teaching new pieces once or twice each year, often when her graduate students want to program a contemporary piece for their recitals or when they bring back repertoire they started learning at a summer camp. Louisa described teaching non-traditional repertoire like fiddle music, jazz, and religious music at student request, and Thomas said he did the same for his students with classical music. Notably, as violists, Diane and Raul said they frequently taught unfamiliar violin repertoire.

Using and Accessing Lists

Table 3. Personal List Usage

Teacher	*Created own list*	*"In my head"*	*Keeps digital music files*
Ashley		x	
Diane		x	
Erin	x		
Grace	x		
Ken			x
Louisa	x	x	
Raul	x		
Thomas		x	

Note. Bryan and Melanie did not report creating their own lists.

The majority of teachers said they did use their own lists or the lists of others to help them choose repertoire. Erin, Louisa, Grace, and Raul compiled their own lists based on past teachers they had worked with and well-known lists created by pedagogues. These lists include a sequence of concertos and a list of lower-level repertoire organized according to their corresponding level of difficulty in the Suzuki repertoire. Louisa stated that because her list consists mainly of college-level repertoire, she has not needed to access it very often in the past five years. Grace said that she uses her list primarily for supplemental repertoire and repertoire outside of the Suzuki volumes. Thomas and Ashley replied that they keep informal lists "in their heads," and both said that they would like to write them down in the future. Similarly, Ken said that the music files in his Dropbox serve as an informal list. Diane mentioned that she refers to her files of music in addition to a mental repertoire list. Generally, teachers reported relying on a combination of lists they had created based on past educational experiences and lists published by other institutions and pedagogues.

Table 4. Common Resources Accessed by Teachers

Teacher	Resource				
	ASTACAP	*Barbara Barber*	*DeLay and Zweig*	*Sassmannshaus Violinmasterclass.com*	*Royal Conservatory of Music*
Ashley		x		x	
Diane					
Erin		x	x		
Grace			x		
Ken	x	x	x	x	x
Louisa		x			x
Melanie	x				
Raul			x	x	
Thomas			x		

Note. Bryan did not report accessing any of the resources listed in this table.

Table 4 indicates resources that two or more teachers reported accessing. The most popular collection the teachers accessed was the Barbara Barber series, a well-known anthology which assigns a level of difficulty based on Suzuki repertoire. In addition, several teachers mentioned Mimi Zweig and Dorothy Delay's supplemental lists and concerto sequence. Grace found the supplemental repertoire list "extremely helpful," because it gave her "a very concrete idea" of the level of a given piece. Melanie said she recently started using *Preparing for Kreutzer*, a collection of intermediate level etudes that includes composers like Dancla and Wohlfahrt. Raul expressed interest in the differences between the supplemental repertoire lists compiled by the Suzuki Association of America and the European Suzuki Association. He reflected on the organization of the ESA's list: by tone, show pieces, Kreisler, and concertos. Thomas said that he uses lists perhaps once a year when he is seeking new repertoire for his students and "just to remind himself what's out there." Ken thought that the ASTACAP (ASTA Certificate Advancement Program), Barbara Barber, and

Kurt Sassmannshaus lists complement each other well, and he considered the Australian Music Examinations Board and ASTACAP repertoire to be particularly valuable references. Likewise, Melanie described the ASTACAP list as an "extremely extensive," "really fantastic resource."

Additional Resources

Bryan, Thomas, and Melanie said that listening to other performers introduced them to new repertoire. This included concerts, recitals, CDs and music on the radio, and televised string competitions. Additionally, the contemporary music festival hosted by the college Diane works at introduces her to hundreds of recently composed works. Furthermore, four teachers—Erin, Ken, Melanie, and Raul—said that they did research on their own or were "always looking" for new repertoire. Melanie said she searched most often for contemporary repertoire, because she thought she had the least knowledge of repertoire from this period. The other interviewees did not give further details about what doing research and "always looking" entailed.

Outcomes

"The Shortest Path": Functions of Repertoire by Category

The repertoire that Ashley, Bryan, Erin, and Ken choose reflects their goal of teaching skills efficiently. Ashley said she omits or teaches excerpts of select Suzuki pieces so that her students can learn new techniques in the fewest number of steps. The "shortest path" entailed students forgoing some of the four Handel sonatas in the Suzuki volumes and modifying the way the Vivaldi Concerto in A Minor is taught so that learning the Vivaldi Concerto in G Minor would not be not necessary. Likewise, Erin

said she focuses on introducing skills early and from a young age, “even if it’s watered down or broken down, just to make it easier for the students when they get to that time to play that high-level skill.” She said she does this through warm-up scales, etudes, and finger exercises. In this way, students may have ample time to master the skill before they encounter it in their repertoire. Bryan said that due to students’ lack of time to practice, he had gradually “pared down” and “concentrated” the core of repertoire he teaches. These teachers believed that these repertoire choices and strategies efficiently facilitated learning technique.

Certain categories of repertoire served different purposes as well. Melanie stated that she uses scales, taught initially by rote, to focus on tone production, intonation, and posture. Erin, Bryan, and Ken, all believed that etudes and technical exercises should be at a more difficult level than repertoire. Or, as Thomas said, “I try to go more with using the repertoire to develop the musician and using supplemental etudes, scales, and techniques to do the technique.” Raul added that etudes also strengthened note-reading skills, and both he and Grace reported using supplemental repertoire to address areas that Suzuki does not, such as music from other time periods. Referencing her choice to depart from the Suzuki repertoire during Books Five and Six, Grace elaborated:

> And there are skills that I know I miss. You know, like, you don't gain the confidence of having faster passages, bigger shifts, more of that virtuosic skill, that you just don't see in Suzuki. Like you just don't see it. You don't have a gradual build up to those things. And so you get done with Suzuki, and you go, "Huh, I can't play Lalo no matter what I would do." Like, "I don't know how to even approach fast arpeggios like that. I don't know what to do with that." And so, I really feel like doing some of the easier, more approachable show pieces and building up not just the skill but the confidence to figure that out and to just go for it.

In other words, a primary reason Grace believed that Book Five or Six was an ideal place to explore outside the Suzuki volumes was that it no longer provided the best path to advanced repertoire.

Notably, Ken did acknowledge the dangers of separating technical learning entirely from the repertoire, which he termed "sterilizing a student spiritually":

> If you get stuck doing the "technique technique technique," you never really you never turn on the creative side. And so again you have to, that's why it's so important to…. If you separate the technical and musical, then you're able to engage the musical at a much earlier point.

He expressed the need for balance between technical facility and musical creativity. Though the techniques serve the music, he stressed that students should be "tidy" as well as "expressive."

Student Motivation and Functions of Non-Traditional Repertoire

Seven teachers—Ashley, Erin, Grace, Ken, Louisa, Melanie, and Raul—connected their repertoire choices to motivation. Ashley said that she wanted her students to like their repertoire, especially her older students, because then they would be intrinsically motivated to practice more. For example, when her students do not like their current repertoire, she may ask them what other piece they would like to play and then use it "as the carrot to get them through that piece…that they don't love." Erin said that when her students lost interest in one etude book, she would propose the comparatively drier and longer *Introducing the Positions* by Harvey Whistler, which successfully convinced them to return to the first etude collection. She said she also asks students who "are in a lull" which fun pieces they would like to play. To prevent boredom and disinterest, Raul's students sometimes set aside and later revisit repertoire,

and Raul believed that simply giving students new repertoire, even if not necessarily harder than their current piece, could give them "a release." Grace similarly stated that when students were "bored out of their mind," they needed to proceed to other repertoire.

Collectively, teachers said that non-traditional repertoire had the overlapping functions of being fun, motivating, relevant to students' home lives, as well as necessary for its inherent stylistic diversity. Ashley stated that pop songs can help keep students excited about the violin, and Louisa said that her studio tradition of playing Christmas carols grew from demand. Erin mentioned using fiddle tunes for fun and to provide her students with more experience playing fast music with slurs. She asks her students if they want to play mariachi music, especially if they are of Hispanic descent, and generally strives to tailor non-traditional repertoire to her students' interests. Grace, Ken, and Thomas gave examples of students and parents asking to learn certain genres because they were relevant to their family backgrounds, including fiddle, Chinese, Hungarian, Jewish, and Latin music. Grace said that including this music in her curriculum made her students' families more likely to support them and to encourage them to continue with violin. Finally, Raul and Melanie did not mention teaching music that ASTA categorizes as Alternative Styles. However, they did say that they included 20th- and 21st -century music to expose their students to different harmonic language. They also did this because they believed that "in the real world," students would not be playing only Baroque, Classical, and Romantic music.

Overcoming Frustration

Erin, Grace, and Louisa discussed situations in which repertoire frustrated their students. When Erin's students felt discouraged by their progress and no longer wanted to play the Suzuki repertoire—for example, when her high school students felt that it was "a baby thing"—she said she would explain why the stepwise approach was necessary, and then they seemed to practice more. For students who progress at a slower pace despite their best efforts, especially for students who have a learning disability, Erin reported using supplemental repertoire to prevent frustration. Louisa also commented that the graduation process at the Suzuki academy resulted in a slower pace through the Suzuki volumes. At the same time, her students learn the pieces at a deeper level. Louisa reflected, "[T]hat has changed my teaching a lot in terms of trying to also get across to the kids how much better it is to know something very well rather than skim the top of pieces." The repertoire's level of difficulty impacted students' frustration, too. Grace explained:

> But in my other teaching, I encounter a lot of students who've been playing for a long time, and nobody's ever taught them what to do and how to be in charge of their playing. And so they're very frustrated, and they really are kind of shocked when I set my expectation for them, and it includes them actually sounding really good. And, you know, I think sometimes they're not happy with being given a lower-level piece, but when they realize that now they're in control of their own tone, and a year from now they'll actually be ready for the piece they want to play, usually students are really excited about that. They're excited that an adult is looking at them and saying, "Hey, I have enough confidence in you and enough respect for you to expect you to be excellent."

Louisa expressed a similar sentiment about students who played repertoire that she judged to be too difficult for them. She said that although she often found herself

"giving in to [her students'] wishes" to play difficult repertoire, if she was right, then "they [had] learned a lesson in that sense."

Technique-Specific, Targeted Repertoire Selection

The teachers often stated that they use specific pieces or collections to reinforce or build an aspect of technique. These repertoire choices are often consistent from student to student regardless of the other factors teachers described. When Erin sees that a student is struggling with a skill or with reading, she uses supplemental materials like Barbara Barber's *Solos for Young Violinists* and *Essential Elements*, or writes her own exercises. She also thinks that *Mastery for Strings* by Laurie Scott and William Dick is useful to beginners for learning fingerboard geography—the sense of where each finger is placed in relation to one another, the body, and the instrument. Erin likes William Starr's *Seventy-Seven Variations on Suzuki Melodies: Technique Builders for Violin*, because it is organized progressively by skill (finger action, bowing technique, shifting, playing in position, harmonics, double stops, combined exercises) and the exercises are short enough that her students do not lose interest. If they have learned the technique in this context, they are less likely to become frustrated when their repertoire calls for that skill. Ashley and Melanie both talked about "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and similar, simple scalar pieces found in the first Suzuki volume as foundational repertoire. Ashley said she always teaches "Twinkle" and Suzuki Book One. She recalled the following anecdote:

> There's one student I experimented with who I didn't teach Book One to. She was a pianist, so she could already read music. So, I taught her the Barbara Barber Book One. And I find that now that she's older, oh she's in Book Five-ish, Six-ish, and there's just some stuff that she's not really good at that I just didn't get to give her with that basic technique from

> Book One. So, basically if you're in my studio, I don't care who you are. You're going to study Book One Suzuki, because it's got all the major technique.

Similarly, Melanie said she builds upon her students' familiarity with the Suzuki repertoire when they begin to play in higher positions. Since the melodies are ingrained, the students can more easily focus on developing tone, intonation, and posture, Melanie's three primary goals.

Diane, Ashley, Raul, Thomas, and Louisa also considered certain repertoire to be exceptionally good vehicles for musicianship and technique. Diane, who has a background in dance, uses Dancla's *Air Varie* to teach bow technique, to instill a sense of rhythm in commonly used positions, and to integrate body mechanics into her students' playing. She explains:

> [Y]ou can teach some of these things which are how you incorporate using your head and your body, your knees, to do longer strokes, to make bow strokes connect. And then, the first variation has us thinking about the bow hand balance as well, from frog to tip and how it adjusts for every need. I think about every millimeter of the bow. There's going to be a slight balance change in the hand, arm, body…. And the different style of how we rotate the forearm [sings rhythm] to going to the frog for this chorus [sings melody] which has us using location in the upper arm in the shoulder joint. And so that transfers--just that [Second] variation alone--has us transfer into three very specific parts of the bow pretty quickly.

Two teachers, Ashley and Raul, stated that the Accolay Violin Concerto was "an amazing concerto for building things" and "a great repertoire piece for technique development," even though the piece did not personally appeal to Raul. Raul also described using Ševčík Opuses Eight and Nine for shifting and double stops, respectively, and mentioned hoping to teach Vincent Persichetti's "Masques" for its extensive use of pizzicato (i.e., plucking the string) and its richer harmonic language. Thomas said he uses Bach's Concerto in A Minor to work on bow control, intonation,

and the Baroque style, and Ashley thinks that the "Largo" by Pugnani works well for building tone. Louisa provides opportunities for her students to collaborate with each other through their repertoire: She said she uses repertoire that is for more than one violin, such as Vivaldi multiple violin concertos and Martha Yasuda's *Christmas Melodies: Double Stop Solos and Duets for Violin*, which serve as opportunities to play duets and reinforce double stop technique in a fun way. In sum, teachers linked categories of repertoire to broad musical functions, such as technique being taught through etudes. In addition to believing repertoire to have the potential to frustrate or motivate students, teachers also considered certain collections or pieces to be valuable resources for building specific techniques.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

This study sought to address the following research questions:

1. How do studio violin teachers select repertoire for their students?
    a. What factors influence studio violin teachers' choice of repertoire?
    b. What factors do studio violin teachers identify as perceived constraints when they choose repertoire?
    c. What resources do studio violin teachers access and subsequently use when making repertoire selection choices?
2. What impacts on student outcomes do studio violin teachers believe are connected to repertoire choice?

Factors, constraints and pressures, and outcomes associated with repertoire selection are closely intertwined. Thus, the discussion section will not be organized in the same manner as the results section. Findings will instead be presented by theme: core repertoire, personalization, technical context, situational context, student and teacher disagreement, professional development, and resources for new and unfamiliar repertoire. The way these themes interact with each other and with the research questions will be described throughout. In the interest of clarity, "participants" will be used to refer to the 10 studio violin teachers interviewed and "teachers" will be used to refer to the community of studio violin teachers at large to which potential implications and conclusions might be generalized. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of limitations and recommendations for future study.

Finding 1: The beginning volumes of the Suzuki repertoire may constitute an effective and preferred core curriculum for teachers who are familiar with the Suzuki

repertoire. More advanced repertoire may be selected based on the belief that it belongs to a canon of expected repertoire.

One of the unanticipated findings of this research was the extent to which identifying as a Suzuki teacher resulted in the Suzuki volumes functioning as a de facto repertoire choice. When asked what factors were most important to them for repertoire selection, Erin's, Grace's, and Louisa's initial and immediate responses were that they primarily follow the Suzuki method. Additionally, most of the teachers who primarily taught Suzuki repertoire did not significantly diverge from it until Volumes Six through Eight. This may indicate that Suzuki teachers feel that their students are well served by the first half of the Suzuki volumes and, as Grace alluded, do not feel the need to search for other repertoire until their students advance to upper-intermediate level repertoire.

Grace believed that the more advanced volumes did not sufficiently prepare students for professional-level repertoire, and Baroque and Classical music did not appeal to her anymore. Indeed, the International Suzuki Association itself recognized the need to include more stylistic diversity in the Suzuki curriculum; due to the lack of Romantic and 20th-century repertoire, the International Teacher Trainers Conference mandated in 2009 that its Violin Committee compile a list of suggested supplementary repertoire for Volumes Six through Eight. The organization was careful to note that these pieces do not constitute an "alternate" or "immutable" curriculum. Neither should they preclude the addition of pieces according to teachers' preferences. Instead, the list complements the repertoire in the volumes by "fill[ing] out the depth of the current books"(Suzuki Association of the Americas," n.d. -b). This reflects similar language used by the participants in this study, who said they personalize repertoire by "filling in

the gaps" of their students' technical and musical development, and collectively expressed a desire to more frequently individualize their repertoire choices as their students progressed.

As previously stated, when choosing more advanced repertoire for their students, many of the participants in this study considered which pieces their students should have exposure to because they believe them to be expected by the violin community. Three participants reported teaching new solo repertoire they had never previously taught infrequently, and Melanie connected her lack of familiarity with contemporary repertoire with an uncertainty concerning which contemporary pieces would "survive the next 100 years." In other words, the participants expressed a belief that the musical community had not reached a consensus regarding which contemporary pieces deserved to join the violin canon of accepted and popular works, and so Melanie was less likely to have a preferred contemporary piece than music from earlier classical eras. Likewise implicit in Melanie's statement is the belief that the Suzuki repertoire had "survived." The above results suggest a strong master-apprentice tradition and an informal set of repertoire expectations within the violin community, though only anecdotal evidence and the high degree of commonality among well-known repertoire lists support these hypotheses.

Moreover, Thomas and Melanie both framed individualizing the repertoire within the context of classical music eras. Thomas had a cyclical curriculum divided by era, and Melanie ensured that Baroque and Classical pieces were included in her university students' curriculum, for example. This may reflect a desire to ensure that their students are well versed in diverse classical music styles, although neither teacher

explicitly stated this as a factor of repertoire selection. Stylistic diversity as both a factor and a goal of repertoire selection is consistent with the beliefs of band directors and is included in the 2014 National Core Music Standards (Bauer, 1996; Forrester, 2017; National Association for Music Educators, n.d.; Sheldon, 2000).

Finding 2: Teachers may not be utilizing repertoire selection as a primary means of personalizing instruction.

Collectively, participants said that the bulk of the repertoire they teach was static. They said this despite espousing, in some cases enthusiastically, that they were open to new repertoire and aspired to grow as educators. Even teachers who said that their students' "path" through repertoire was very individualized acknowledged that their students should and would learn certain repertoire as they became more advanced violinists. Instead, teachers chose to personalize instruction by changing the repertoire order, adjusting the pace of instruction, and changing their pedagogical approaches. Non-traditional repertoire did not appear to be a significant way of personalizing instruction for most of the teachers.

Mackworth-Young (1991) found that pupil-centered lessons that employ teacher-direction and pupil-direction were more effective than lessons that featured the latter two approaches alone. In teacher-directed lessons or pupil-directed lessons, the teacher or the pupil "decide who is in control and decide what, when and how much to do," respectively; in contrast, the major considerations of pupil-centered lessons are the pupils' interests, since "the teacher is sensitive to the pupils' indications of what he wishes to learn and of the way in which he prefers to work" (p. 27). Notably, pupil-centered lessons provide enough teacher-direction so that the student feels supported

rather than “abandoned,” since the student’s progress relies heavily on the teacher’s expertise (p. 30).

The one-to-one setting affords teachers the opportunity to tailor their teaching to the needs of the student. Moreover, the body of solo repertoire composed for violin is vast. While solo repertoire is not the only means of practicing a pupil-centered approach, it is a key component of the curriculum. It is true that students may not be as familiar with the body of solo violin repertoire as their teachers, especially with respect to the challenges specific to each piece. However, one potential conclusion of Finding 2 could be that if teachers do not respond to their students’ solo repertoire preferences or are unaware of them, they may be forgoing a valuable educational opportunity.

Furthermore, these “paths” through repertoire were often described by participants as being a sequenced and gradual acquisition of skills. As noted in Finding 1, repertoire selection did not become more personalized until students had learned the first half of the Suzuki repertoire. Yet, there may be a danger in focusing on skill development if it results in neglecting the development of autonomy and self-determination, the absence of which are strongly linked with giving up music tuition (O’Neill et al., 2002). Without teaching approaches that adequately foster student autonomy and self-determination, students may become disengaged with their lessons. McPhail (2010) cautions teachers against this and identifies the students’ transition from primary to secondary school as an especially important period. When students start Suzuki repertoire as young children, this transition often coincides with the volumes participants reported diverging from. In sum, while participants as a group may not be personalizing their repertoire for their students—possibly to the detriment of

their educations—when they start permitting more student repertoire choice, they do so at a time critical to ensuring their students continue with the violin.

Finding 3: Teachers believe that the technical requirements of a piece relative to their students' technical ability are critical factors of repertoire selection and strive to choose pieces in a manner that facilitates the sequential acquisition of skills.

These results reflect widely held views about repertoire in the music education community (Apfelstadt, 2000; Backes, 2010; Geraldi, 2008; Hopkins, 2013; Jorgensen, 1986; McCallum, 2007; Rhoades & Shipps, 1991; Rotjan, 2018). As violin pedagogue Mimi Zweig said in an interview published in the string magazine *The Strad*, she views sequences of repertoire as the framework for students' technical and musical growth; they can "absorb" new repertoire easily if the teacher reviews and incorporates the tasks learned in previous, easier repertoire (Hampton, 2017). According to Zweig, concurrently learning repertoire below, at, and slightly above the student's current level results in students who are confident as well as challenged. Indeed, Grace recounted instances when students had been assigned repertoire above their ability level and grew frustrated. Conversely, setting high expectations for a lower-level, more appropriately matched piece helped her students to feel in control of their own learning. The difficulty, then, is that the teacher must have a sufficient understanding of both the components of the repertoire and their students' capabilities in order to effect their desired outcomes. A study of the teaching practices of nine studio piano teachers found that though most participants did not regard repertoire assignment as "problematic," they did recognize that it could be difficult to match the repertoire to a particular student and that it was a time-consuming process (Jorgensen, 1986). In tandem with Findings 1

and 2, it follows that teachers may not often choose to teach new repertoire because they lack this time.

Finding 4: Teachers consider and are constrained by situational context when they assign repertoire. In this thesis, situational context refers to the reason for assigning or prescribing repertoire, such as a performance opportunity as well as repertoire's aesthetic appeal and potential to motivate students.

Participants reported that they consider how to assign repertoire based on the performance setting. For example, repertoire chosen for an audition might exhibit students' strengths, and repertoire selected without a specific performance goal might instead concentrate on developing areas in which students are less proficient. Students' lack of time and the technical rigor of the solo and regional and orchestra competition requirements pressured participants to choose certain pieces and to plan their curricula well in advance of the competitions. Still, a few participants said they aspired to maintain a diversity of repertoire in their studio; students taught by the same teacher may not be playing the same pieces at the same time. Participants also recognized the value of having shared musical experiences with their peer groups, such as participating in Suzuki camps, orchestra, and solo competitions.

Evidence is mixed regarding how competitions impact student outcomes. Music teachers have traditionally used competitions to motivate their students to practice (Hendricks, Smith, & Stanuch, 2014). Surveys of high school students who participated in an advanced orchestra and concert band program attributed high levels of musical and creative satisfaction, enjoyment of the repertoire, and feelings of belonging to the program; students also perceived that the challenges provided by the difficulty of the

repertoire improved their technical skills (Hewitt & Allan, 2012). A larger survey of secondary school ensemble musicians found that festival participation motivated students to continue their instrumental study, particularly for middle school students (Lowe, 2018). Yet, Hendricks et al. (2014) noted "emphasizing competition may cause students to rely more on social comparison than teacher feedback, to believe that their ability is fixed and unchangeable, and to give up easily after repeated failure" (p. 36). A competitive climate can result in fear and anxiety, including performance anxiety, as a study of gifted adolescent musicians observed (Wang, 2001).

Several participants alluded to this tension between wanting to ensure their students' social and emotional well-being through participation and their misgivings about a competitive environment. The participants from Texas were careful not to criticize their colleagues or their musical community, but also expressed frustration with the musical culture. Erin, for example, might work on an etude with a student for an entire month so that he or she could successfully audition. Bryan stressed his belief that teachers should never shame their students as a means of improvement, and Ken framed competitiveness as a positive factor for repertoire selection as long as it did not involve "one-upping" another student. Participants listed several repertoire strategies to manage competition, such as choosing from a limited and easier collection of pieces, refusing to teach students overly difficult repertoire, creating a "wish list" of future repertoire, and diversifying the repertoire within their studio.

Participants also reported that their students could be motivated by repertoire they enjoyed playing: different, student-selected, religious, popular, or multicultural repertoire. They said that students seemed "excited" about the violin, "thought it was

fun," and seemed to practice more. Indeed, a small study of the studio practices of piano teachers revealed that repertoire assignment, along with examinations, was their preferred strategy for motivating students to practice (Jorgensen, 1986). However, as stated in Findings 1 and 2, new repertoire and student choice are not important factors in participants' curricular design. One possible explanation for this could be a conflict between what teachers believe is epistemologically important and their desire to answer their students' desiderata (McPhail, 2013). Since unfamiliar repertoire falls outside of teachers' core repertoire—a core repertoire that fulfills their curricular goals—unfamiliar and nontraditional repertoire are comparatively neglected, despite their appeal to students.

Finding 5: Teachers do not perceive that students or their parents often disagree with them about repertoire. They attribute this lack of disagreement to a bond of trust built over many years.

Participants did not identify student and parent disagreement about repertoire as major constraints or pressures because they felt their students trusted and respected their teachers' decisions. This was likely due in part to participants' greater familiarity with the violin and its repertoire relative to the knowledge of their students and of their students' parents. If students expressed disagreement, participants said they would explain their rationale to them. If parents expressed disagreement, participants said they would listen to their parents, but their opinions may not ultimately affect the repertoire itself. Gaunt (2008) identified trust as an underlying characteristic of one-to-one teaching, especially students' trust in their teachers. When studio teachers demonstrate expert knowledge, their students are "more likely to submit to their role as apprentices"

in the master-apprentice relationship (Rakena, Airini, & Brown, 2016; p. 292). Additionally, parental involvement is one of the major tenets of the Suzuki philosophy (Starr, 1976), which is a key characteristic of the learning environment for many of the students in these participants' studios. Creech and Hallam (2010) found that studio violin teachers believe they "welcome the views of parents on matters relating to violin study" but are less tolerant when they disagree with them (p. 411). Still, an alternative explanation for the lack of disagreement between participants and their students could be ascribed to the nature of the one-to-one lesson, in which the teacher's potential to dominate lesson interactions may render the student relatively passive (Burwell et al., 2017). In this situation, the teacher would be unaware if his or her student disagreed. The student perspective was beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, further study, such as interviews with teachers and their students, would be required to determine how the repertoire students play and are assigned impacts their engagement with their learning as well as how it impacts their communication with their studio teachers regarding the repertoire selection process.

Finding 6: Teachers may not make time to explore repertoire unfamiliar to them.

Grace said she did not have time for professional development activities like learning new repertoire because of other jobs. She said she did not feel significant pressure to seek unfamiliar repertoire, since she was well versed in her core repertoire—Suzuki. She could easily anticipate her students' difficulties, and she thought her students were "doing well." Similarly, Bryan expressed the belief that his students did not have the time for him to learn how to teach new repertoire. That is, the constraint he

identified was not only the time he would need to invest in learning a new piece, but the time required to build his pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)—which includes "an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics and lessons" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). These participants expressed a desire to learn new pieces and to learn them at a deep enough level to teach them well, which is time-consuming. It may be inferred from these participants' statements that knowing how to teach certain repertoire effectively was a key consideration of repertoire selection. Likewise, it follows that having inadequate PCK for a piece is a constraint.

Finding 7: Teachers believe their colleagues to be valuable resources for recommending repertoire that was both familiar and unfamiliar to them, but student interest guided most novel repertoire choices.

Participants said they sought repertoire advice from colleagues in a variety of settings, including masterclasses, conferences, trainings, online, and in person or through personal correspondence. This finding concurs with a survey of high school band directors, although recommendations from colleagues was rated as being of "average" importance in comparison with other selection techniques like listening to promotional recordings and browsing at a music store (Bauer, 1996, p. 6). However, this finding is more strongly supported by a more recent survey of secondary school band directors (Crochet, 2006), which ranked colleague recommendations as the second most commonly used resource, and interviews during which middle school band directors voiced broad support for collaboration with colleagues (Chen, 2018). In

addition, participants who used their own repertoire lists based them in part on their own musical experiences and past teachers, in line with the influences and resources cited by preservice music teachers (Forrester, 2017). No data is available regarding the resources studio music teachers use. Notably, Finding 7 lends further support to Findings 1 and 3, as teachers expressed the need to search or consult with others for additional intermediate and advanced pieces—repertoire beyond their core repertoire—and they often looked for pieces that facilitated learning a specific skill or "filled a gap" in a sequence of desired technical skills (Finding 3).

New repertoire often entered the studio because of students' desire to play particular pieces or due to competition requirements. In this case, coding revealed student interest to be both a factor and a resource, just as competitions and audition requirements function as constraints and resources. These themes were previously discussed in Finding 4.

It is not clear which resources participants believe are most effective for choosing repertoire, as the participants were not asked to compare each resource's frequency of use or its perceived utility. A quantitative approach may be more appropriate for further exploration of the topic.

Limitations

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is the instrument (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). Thus, my inexperience conducting interviews may have been a limiting factor. Effective interviewing requires that the researcher have the ability to judge when and whether to interrupt participants during their responses; the researcher should anticipate which directions the interview may take without letting

those preconceptions unduly influence his or her interpretation of what was said (Galletta, 2013). I often did not redirect participants when their responses diverged from the research questions and occasionally failed to ask follow-up questions that might have evoked more detailed answers. Due to the length of some of the participants' responses, there was not enough time to ask every question on the interview guide for every interview. In those cases, I omitted the questions that they had partially answered in previous responses and instead attempted to steer the conversation toward different aspects of their repertoire selection processes. Additionally, because participants often partially answered one of the interview questions in response to another, I frequently altered the order of the questions as a means of building reciprocity and a more logical interview progression.

The design of the research questions may also have distorted the findings, since the distinctions among factors, constraints and pressures, resources, and outcomes were not consistently reflected in participant responses. Coding generated significant areas of overlap. Moreover, there were no objective means of comparing the intensity of the influences that participants identified as affecting their repertoire selection processes. That is, participants were not asked to rank influences because they generated all the data themselves. This overlap was perhaps most evident within the themes of core repertoire, student interest, and resources for new and unfamiliar repertoire, all of which were tied to every research question.

Due to the small sample population and the exploratory nature of this research, the views expressed by the participants cannot be generalized to represent those of all studio violin teachers. Participants' geographic location, high level of pedagogical

training, and many years of teaching experience were marked characteristics of the study. Furthermore, all participants had familiarity with the Suzuki method and most had extensive training in the philosophy, thus resulting in selective bias towards its repertoire. Interviews with teachers employing a traditional approach, one based on the European conservatory model, likely would have yielded very different results. This may be especially relevant for core repertoire's impact on curricular choice, as described in Finding 1.

Recommendations

As a result of the selection criteria and small number of interviews, this research cannot be generalized to the larger studio violin teaching community. However, its findings could serve as the basis for future quantitative work. A survey of a more representative sample of studio violin teachers that did not frame repertoire selection considerations as factors, constraints and pressures, resources, and outcomes, but instead asked teachers to rate their agreement with influences on their repertoire selection processes, could be an appropriate next step. Likewise, the participants in this study were experienced and educated practitioners who, for the most part, taught in communities with vibrant and competitive musical cultures. Therefore, studio violin teachers who teach in communities with weaker musical infrastructure, who have acquired their pedagogical knowledge through less formal avenues, and who have less teaching experience may be ideal populations for additional interview-based work.

Given the impact identifying as a Suzuki teacher had on this research and the philosophy's widespread recognition in the U.S. violin teaching community, it may be valuable to study the attitudes of Suzuki teachers regarding repertoire selection. There is

no available data regarding the Suzuki book level of training teachers attain or the philosophy's usage among studio violin teachers as compared to other pedagogical violin methods or philosophies. Furthermore, while this study revealed some teacher attitudes concerning supplementary repertoire, the Suzuki repertoire was not its sole focus. Further qualitative research may be best suited to describing how and why Suzuki teachers choose to supplement or diverge from the Suzuki repertoire.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Repertoire is an essential part of curriculum: it is through repertoire that students learn to grow musically and artistically. It is through repertoire and its affiliated curricular goals that music teachers implicitly and explicitly convey what musical and artistic growth entails. And it is, perhaps, for this reason that music teachers find planning it to be so difficult. The studio violin teachers in this study were no different, as evidenced by the following comments:

> "[T]his is something that every teacher I know has one of two feelings about: They totally struggle with it, or they go, "Eh, this is what I do, and that's what I do. Done." (Grace)
>
> Repertoire is so hard. It's just so difficult to pick, because you think you're getting something for a student, and it's like, kind of there but it's not what you expected. Or you think you know what repertoire is that you want to pull out for them, because you think that they need this technique, but then they don't need it at all…. Yeah, repertoire is like the hardest. Oh my God." (Ashley)
>
> "I think repertoire is like picking your poison…. The technique is like something that needs [pause] so that if it needs an additive, you have to be careful what you'd give it. You know, it's like violin vitamins." (Bryan)

These statements illustrate the complexity and conflicts inherent in repertoire selection; namely, that it is a decision teachers believe must be carefully considered for every student despite a relative uniformity of repertoire choices.

This instrumental case study sought to explore the repertoire selection processes of studio violin teachers. During semi-structured interviews, 10 studio violin teachers discussed the factors, constraints, and pressures that they believed influence their choice of repertoire; the resources they use and access when making these choices; and how they perceive these choices impact student outcomes. The participants were selected

based on their many years of experience teaching a diversity of students by age and skill level.

Although the research questions framed repertoire selection as consisting of factors, constraints and pressures, resources, and outcomes, the participants' responses revealed significant overlap between these aspects of the process. Instead, the following themes arose: core repertoire, personalization, technical context, situational context, student and teacher disagreement, professional development, and resources for new and unfamiliar repertoire. Seven findings emerged:

1. The beginning volumes of the Suzuki repertoire may constitute an effective and preferred core curriculum for teachers who are familiar with the Suzuki repertoire. More advanced repertoire may be selected based on the belief that it belongs to a canon of expected repertoire.

2. Teachers may not be utilizing repertoire selection as a primary means of personalizing instruction.

3. Teachers believe that the technical requirements of a piece relative to their students' technical ability are critical factors of repertoire selection and strive to choose pieces in a manner that facilitates the sequential acquisition of skills.

4. Teachers consider and are constrained by situational context when they assign repertoire. In this thesis, situational context refers to the reason for assigning or prescribing repertoire, such as a performance opportunity as well as repertoire's aesthetic appeal and potential to motivate students.

5. Teachers do not perceive that students or their parents often disagree with them about repertoire. They attribute this lack of disagreement to a bond of trust built over many years.

6. Teachers may not make time to explore repertoire unfamiliar to them.

7. Teachers believe their colleagues to be valuable resources for recommending repertoire that was both familiar and unfamiliar to them, but student interest guided most novel repertoire choices.

These findings suggest a strong master-apprentice tradition and an informal set of repertoire expectations within the violin community. The adherence to a core repertoire may also have negative implications for a pupil-centered education, since students may become discouraged or disengaged if their needs and interests are not being addressed. At the same time, the close relationships fostered by one-to-one instruction may facilitate student agreement with teachers' repertoire choices, though teachers may not be aware when students' have conflicting opinions because of this master-apprentice relationship. Additionally, teachers may balance their desire to ensure their students have the opportunity to share the same type of musical experiences, such as competitions and Suzuki camps, with the fact that the repertoire required by participation may limit their own curricular choices. Finally, when teachers do choose to teach repertoire unfamiliar to them, despite their own lack of time for professional development, they may do so in accordance with student interest.

When I began this thesis, I expected that I would emerge with a list of factors that studio violin teachers consider when choosing their repertoire, some of which they would also identify as constraints. Instead, I found that teachers' curricular choices cannot be separated from the context of the institutions, musical communities, and organizations within which they work, each setting with its own expectations. Thus, while this thesis cannot speak to the experiences of the studio violin teacher community as a whole, I hope that illuminating the practices of a few experienced teachers will be a valuable first step upon which further research can build.

Appendix A

Consent Script

Please keep in mind that your participation is voluntary. I can provide this consent script in writing as well as further details about this research upon request. My name is Teagan Roberts, and I am a University of Oregon student conducting research for my thesis about curricular choices in violin studio teaching. The purpose of this research is to investigate what factors influence and constrain repertoire choice and the student outcomes that result from these choices. I am interested in your experiences as a violin studio teacher and will interview you for 30-40 minutes. Interviews will be recorded. If you are willing and able, there may also be a brief follow-up interview at a later date. This research has no known risks. However, this interview will be transcribed in full and appended to the thesis, and thus anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed. It will contribute to the academic community, because repertoire choice in the studio setting is largely unstudied.

Your privacy is important, and no personal information that results from this interview will be published. Pseudonyms will be used, and recordings will be stored in a secure location. Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Do you consent?

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Demographic information:

- How long have you taught in a studio setting (one-to-one lessons in which you were the primary teacher)? Did you teach when you were in high school or college?

- How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio? What is the fewest and greatest number of students you have taught at one time? (estimation)

- Please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Repertoire questions:

- Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

- What are the factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

- Do you have a teaching philosophy? If so, describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose.

- To what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

- How do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your students' skill level?

- Describe, if applicable, the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice.

- What resources do you use/access when making repertoire selection choices?

- Has the repertoire that you teach changed over time? Why or why not?

- (If applicable) Are there any specific people, experiences, or realizations that were either significant to making this change or strengthened your belief that your existing repertoire was a good fit for your studio? Please elaborate.

- How often do you teach repertoire that you have never previously learned yourself? Why do you choose to teach this new repertoire, and from where do you get the idea to expand the repertoire that you teach?

- Do you teach any repertoire that you or others might consider "non-traditional?" Why or why not?

- Do you keep a repertoire list? Are there any pieces that you always teach or never teach, based on students' skill level, age, or other factors?

- If you do keep a repertoire list, would you be willing to share it and have it included in the final thesis? (secondary objective)

- Is there anything else that you want to add?/Is there anything else that you want to add that wasn't addressed by the repertoire questions?

Appendix C

Transcripts

These transcripts are ordered chronologically by interview date.

Thomas.2019-01-10

TR: [00:02:00] Okay. And do you consent?

Thomas: [00:02:03] I do.

TR: [00:02:08] Oh my gosh. Sorry, Word is crashing.

TR: [00:02:18] How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Thomas: [00:02:23] I have taught in the studio setting now for about 20 years.

TR: [00:02:31] And did you begin teaching when you were in high school or college?

Thomas: [00:02:36] In college.

TR: [00:02:38] Okay. So, does the 20 years include the lessons you were teaching in college as well?

Thomas: [00:02:46] Yes.

TR: [00:02:48] How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Thomas: [00:02:54] I usually have 20 hours' worth of teaching, which can range from probably 15 to 25 students.

TR: [00:03:07] Okay. And do you teach violin and viola?

Thomas: [00:03:12] I do.

TR: [00:03:13] How many of your students currently are violinists?

Thomas: [00:03:21] Maybe I can tell you violists, and then I'll count backwards. I have three violists, and everyone else is violin right now. So that'd be--I can give you an exact number if you want. Otherwise, it's umm.

TR: [00:03:36] Okay, but predominantly violin.

Thomas: [00:03:41] Predominantly violin. Yeah.

TR: [00:03:43] And then please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Thomas: [00:03:48] My youngest student currently is five and brand new, and my oldest student is a senior in high school, an advanced violist.

TR: [00:04:00] Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal and professional experiences.

Thomas: [00:04:15] So, I started playing violin myself around about 7-years-old and have played since then. I went to university and got undergrad and graduate degrees in violin and viola performance. And then I took long-term Suzuki teacher training after that. Significant teachers include [applied faculty at public university in Texas,] who was my teacher growing up and then currently teaches my daughters. And I also play currently in the [city name] Opera. Does answer that?

TR: [00:04:52] Yes, thank you. What are the factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Thomas: [00:05:02] Most important is how does it contribute to their development as a musician. Thinking in line with that: Does it add to technical abilities or musicianship? The secondary factor would be: Do they have any contests or anything else coming up or recitals coming up that they need to learn specific repertoire for?

TR: [00:05:26] And how do you balance technical difficulties with musical expression when choosing rep?

Thomas: [00:05:38] I try to go more with using the repertoire to develop the musician and using supplemental etudes, scales, and techniques to do the technique.

TR: [00:05:53] And roughly what proportion of the musical material that you work on is melodies, repertoire with melodies, sorry, and then scales and etudes or other supplementary material?

Thomas: [00:06:13] It probably depends on the age and level of a student. If you're younger, the vast majority of the lesson, maybe 75 or 80 percent of the lesson, would be spent on repertoire or pieces as opposed to technique or exercises.

Thomas: [00:06:27] And by the time you're in high school, it's probably, half and half maybe.

TR: [00:06:35] Do you have a teaching philosophy, and if so describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose.

Thomas: [00:06:44] So, I'm a Suzuki teacher, so I suppose the philosophy has to do with listening to music as a good way to learn it, whether you're reading it or not,

depending what level you are. But a big part of the teaching is using listening. In addition to that, the belief that any student that I teach is capable of doing what I've asked them to do. It may not always be on the path to go to conservatory to become a music major. But basically the idea that any kid can play the violin or viola. As far as how that relates to the repertoire, maybe it makes me patient with them.

Thomas: [00:07:35] If I don't see that they have exactly mastered whatever concept might be presented in one piece, I'll try to find more music like that to help them keep exploring whatever topic it is we're working on.

TR: [00:07:51] And to what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Thomas: [00:07:58] Not a lot until high school or until they're I guess what you might call an advanced student. So, everybody that I teach goes through Suzuki Book Six or Seven on violin, and everybody goes to probably Five or Six on viola. And at which point, once you're in high school or after that, we start looking more at what they might be interested in learning or what else needs to be developed.

Thomas: [00:08:31] Usually, though it may change order what pieces they do, but usually everybody ends up playing the same repertoire.

TR: [00:08:37] Is there a reason that you chose those books or those pieces to stop and then individualize?

Thomas: [00:08:49] Like why did I stop after Book Seven?

TR: [00:08:51] Yeah.

Thomas: [00:08:55] Well, I don't consider Books Nine and Ten as Suzuki, which are Mozart concertos. I don't really call those Suzuki books. So, a kid will still play one of those pieces, either the Mozart A or the Mozart D or G concertos. Book Eight. I don't

know. Maybe, usually after Book Seven, after the Bach A Minor Concerto, we're all kind of ready to explore some other stuff for a while. And on viola, I think the same answer. I feel like there's more repertoire out there to explore that's perhaps more interesting to the kids.

TR: [00:09:34] Is it because of the Baroque-heavy emphasis or...?

Thomas: [00:09:42] If I'm being totally honest, it's partly my own selfishness. It's a little bit the Baroque-heavy emphasis. In Book Eight, we kind of pick and choose some little pieces that are in there, but I didn't used to be a tremendous fan of the Veracini Sonata, although I'm liking it more now. The Bach unaccompanied stuff in the end of Book Seven, and I think there's an arrangement of one of the sonatas, solo sonatas in Book Eight, like a movement from it. I just, I'd rather have them get the real music at that point as opposed to reading it out of the Suzuki to try to introduce them to this great book of sonatas and partitas by Bach.

Thomas: [00:10:31] It's not just that it's Baroque-heavy. Although, by then, we're usually ready to explore something non-Baroque for a while and then come back to it.

TR: [00:10:40] Thanks for expanding on that. And then, how do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your student's skill level?

Thomas: [00:10:53] I think it's important. I'm not, I'm not sure what you mean. But maybe this is what you mean. I try to keep the repertoire slightly easier than what their technical skills are able to do.

TR: [00:11:09] Okay. When do you decide to move forward through the Suzuki books or hold back? And do you add any repertoire in if you'd stayed on a piece for a long time?

Thomas: [00:11:24] Let's see. Adding repertoire in, yes, we do that during group classes. So, quite often after the Book Four or Five level, my wife and I teach supplemental literature in group class. So, kids are getting it there no matter how long they've spent on Suzuki rep in private lessons. And I'm sorry what was the first question? How do I decide when to move on?

TR: [00:11:52] How do you decide whether to stay on the same piece and continue working on it or move on?

Thomas: [00:12:00] As a basic, generic answer, I like the idea that they would be ready to play it in a recital before we would before we would officially be done with it. Although, before they're ready for that, we would be looking at other repertoire. Kind of polishing one piece while learning another.

TR: [00:12:24] Decide, if applicable the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice.

Thomas: [00:12:34] The big constraint is starting in middle school in Texas, kids are doing public school orchestra, which has regional orchestra auditions, and it also has solo and ensemble private contests sort of thing. In middle school, that's less of a big deal lately, but in high school it tends to take over a whole semester's worth of work. And so I have to consider how much time kids are spending working for these contests. And will they be able to keep up their private lesson demands. So, I try to lately do a little less heavy material in the fall and use the spring semester to increase the difficulty and heaviness of it.

TR: [00:13:21] So, just to be clear, the repertoire that you're working on with your studio, it's different than this stuff, the repertoire that they are preparing for contests?

Thomas: [00:13:34] Yes and no. If they're preparing for the youth orchestra, the region audition, it is definitely different. They have to, in high school they have to perform a high-level etude like Rode or Fiorello. In middle school, that's less true.

Thomas: [00:13:50] Middle school is usually just snippets from a small orchestra piece, but absolutely in high school it's different. And for the solo contests, they have set lists that they can choose from. And how those pieces are arranged, so sometimes that affects what choices we can make.

TR: [00:14:15] Has the repertoire that you teach changed over time? And why or why not?

Thomas: [00:14:21] Yes, it's gotten more advanced because the studio has also grown. So, my wife and I have been here in Texas for 12 years now. So we, you know, we had a young studio, but we're starting to get more advanced high schoolers, so we're branching out into more difficult repertoire. And in other ways, it's gotten more set. I've learned there are certain pieces I want everybody to learn. For example, I didn't used to require everybody to do the Bach A Minor Concerto, but lately I have. But as they get out of the Suzuki books, there has been a lot a lot more different repertoire coming into the studio lately.

TR: [00:15:06] And why do you want everyone to learn the Bach A Minor Concerto?

Thomas: [00:15:14] The way I teach it, it's a really great piece to work on bow control and to be paying attention to what your bow divisions are. In addition, it's really great for working on intonation and stylistic considerations.

Thomas: [00:15:35] And I think it's a good branch off then to start into some of the more upper-level student concertos after that.

TR: [00:15:48] Are there any specific people, experiences, or realizations that were either significant to making this change or strengthened your belief that your existing repertoire was a good fit for your studio. This is a follow-up to the second question. I know you sort of answered it.

Thomas: [00:16:04] Are there any.... I'm sorry, I'm reading along with you.

Thomas: [00:16:12] Yes, seeing [applied faculty at university in Texas] work with my daughter has really influenced certain pieces that I like to teach or how I like to see them teach. In addition, watching her. She's currently 12. So, watching her grow up through the repertoire with other people working with her has given me new insights into some repertoire that I'm teaching.

TR: [00:16:37] I know this is putting you on the spot. Can you give any more specific examples about the insights?

Thomas: [00:16:45] Sure. So, with [redacted,] that's her name. Watching her work through upper-level repertoire. Like, last year she worked on the Bruch Violin Concerto, and she started taking that into bigger contests. She worked with [several prominent violinists in the area] a little bit. And so watching these people work with her and get nit-picky on certain specific details in the piece that maybe I hadn't seen when I learned it the first time myself. And it's a relatively new piece that I've been teaching, so it kind of opened up my eyes to some things that I needed to be seeing.

Thomas: [00:17:27] Does that answer that?

TR: [00:17:28] Yes. That's a great answer, thanks. So along the same lines, how often you teach rep that you have never previously learned yourself?

Thomas: [00:17:38] That's getting to be more and more. Also as the kids get more advanced. So, it used to be, I don't know maybe one or two kids this semester might

learn a piece that I hadn't played or taught before, and now it's maybe four or five. It's usually in the high school level and maybe a, like for example, a high school violist came to me and said he had heard this great Shostakovich romance piece he wanted to play and I'd never played it on the viola. I played a duet version of it on violin, so I felt comfortable teaching it. So things like that. Or another student said they heard something about Brahms and wanted to give it a shot. And I hadn't played it. But we decided to do it anyway.

TR: [00:18:23] Okay. Your inspiration to teach new repertoire usually comes from the students or are there other reasons or sources you get the new repertoire from?

Thomas: [00:18:36] So, as far as teaching repertoire that I'm less familiar with, that usually comes from the student asking to learn something or if I've seen a recital recently where other teachers maybe have worked on a piece and I hadn't thought of teaching it to my kids. That's probably the bulk of where new repertoire might find its way into our studio.

TR: [00:18:58] And then just more generally, what resources do you use when selecting repertoire? Or access?

Thomas: [00:19:05] Sure.

Thomas: [00:19:08] So, I don't use a ton. There's a website. Indiana University has Mimi Zweig's list up and along with that Dorothy DeLay, there's links to Dorothy DeLay's progression. And so when I find myself wondering what a kid should do or looking for new possibilities for a kid, I'll look at that. And for viola, Don Mackinnon has a list similar to Dorothy DeLay's that I look at it. There's also a, I can't remember the name of it. I think the book is called The Viola. I can't remember the author, but there's a list in the back of that book as well for viola repertoire.

TR: [00:19:48] So, do you find yourself going back to these lists often? Or is it just when you have advanced students and don't know in which direction to go with them?

Thomas: [00:20:00] Maybe once a year I like to take a look through that list just to remind myself of what's out there that I haven't been practicing or taught myself lately. So, I like to look through it as a reminder that there's more out there than what I've been doing. But it's not, it's not very often that I look through it.

TR: [00:20:19] Do you teach any repertoire that you or others might consider non-traditional? And why or why not?

Thomas: [00:20:26] Not often. There's one kid right now that I know that is super into fiddle. And his dad plays banjo. And so his dad asked, actually when I first started him if I'd be willing to help him learn some fiddle tunes. And I told him, "I'm not a fiddler, but I'm happy to help him do what I know how to do."

Thomas: [00:20:50] He's a relatively young kid still, and kind of in Suzuki Two/Three. So, towards the beginning of his musical education. And if he were to take off with fiddle, I'd pass him on to somebody who is more adept at it. But that's the only non-traditional thing I have right now, I think.

TR: [00:21:13] Do you keep a repertoire list?

Thomas: [00:21:18] It's funny, I was reading through your list today, and I was like, "I really should keep a repertoire list." In my head, but I don't have anything written out. But as my wife and I were looking at it, and kind of said, "You know we really should make a repertoire list and have it to check off when kids do it." But as a short answer: no, not really.

TR: [00:21:41] I've had a couple other teachers also say, "I keep one in my head."

Thomas: [00:21:45] Yeah. It's literally been on my list for three years to write down a repertoire list, and I've just never done it.

TR: [00:21:53] So, you already mentioned the Bach A Minor Concerto. Are there any other pieces that you always teach?

Thomas: [00:22:06] If they get past that. Sure. Before that, anything in Suzuki. After that the. I hadn't put it into these words, so I'll give you my wife's answer. But I kind of do the same thing. We cycle through Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern. So the Bach would be the Baroque, and after that everybody learns the Haydn G Major Concerto. And then Romantic, almost everyone learns the de Beriot Concerto in A Minor, the first moment. And then for Modern, almost everybody learns the Bartok Romanian Dances.

Thomas: [00:22:55] And then from there, after that, we introduce the Solo Sonatas and Partitas. Usually the D Minor "Allemande" and "Gigue" come first and then from there we branch off. So I don't want to say everybody has to play anything after that, but from there we branched off into some other solo sonatas. And then everybody plays one of the Mozart concertos, either Three, Four, Five. And if they're still with us after that, usually Bruch or Lalo Concerto and Kabalevsky for the Modern piece.

TR: [00:23:31] And how do you make a decision if you and a particular student do not agree on repertoire?

Thomas: [00:23:42] I don't think I've ever had that happen. Sorry.

TR: [00:23:49] Lucky.

Thomas: [00:23:49] Well I think it's maybe it's lucky or maybe I'm laid back, because usually I ask kids what they're interested in before we dive too deep into what I want. So, I kind of get a sense like if a kid, you mentioned being Baroque-heavy. I kind of get

that sense before we've even talked about it. And so rather than saying, "after you've done the A Minor Concerto, you have to go to do some solo sonatas or other Baroque," I might go out of order and give them the Bartok or give them the de Beriot and then come back and pick up Baroque later. So, I try to keep an open mind about it. Some pieces, kids will tell me, "I really don't want this." And I usually, and they have to anyway. Or they have to give me a reason why they don't want to, and then I'll go searching for a supplemental piece that features the same thing that I want.

TR: [00:24:41] Okay. And then are there any pieces that you never teach or used to teach but stopped teaching?

Thomas: [00:24:54] I never teach the Handel Sonata in Book Seven. I'm usually Handel-ed out by then. And I would teach it, if a kid wanted to learn it. For sure, I would teach it, but I haven't.

Thomas: [00:25:14] I'm trying to think. Anything else I don't teach. I can't think of anything right now.

Thomas: [00:25:26] I can't think of anything that I'd be opposed to teaching off the top of my head. If a kid came and was excited to learn it, I'd probably be excited to teach it.

TR: [00:25:33] Okay. Is there anything else that you want to add about how you choose repertoire?

Thomas: [00:25:44] No, I don't think so.

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TR: [00:04:22] Okay. And do you consent?

Ken: [00:04:25] I do.

Ken: [00:04:31] How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Ken: [00:04:36] Twenty-seven.

TR: [00:04:38] Okay. Did you teach when you were in high school or college?

Ken: [00:04:42] Well, I started when I was in college.

TR: [00:04:45] And do those 27 years count the years that you were teaching in college too or not?

Ken: [00:04:52] Yes, it does.

TR: [00:04:53] Yes. Okay. How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Ken: [00:05:00] So, it's gone up and down over the years. As little as three, and I currently have 30.

TR: [00:05:07] Okay. Please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Ken: [00:05:19] Ability: beginner. Having played a year and a half all the way up through highly advanced students. The beginner having played a year and a half is currently seven, starting when she was maybe five-and-a-half or six, and the oldest is an adult. I have a 74-year-old student.

TR: [00:05:45] So, do you ever start students on violin?

Ken: [00:05:50] I have done a lot of that. I don't currently do that. I do a lot of supervision of college students at [small, private university in the Northwest] who are

starting beginner students. So, most of my beginner teaching work is through supervision of other teachers.

TR: [00:06:13] Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal and professional experiences.

Ken: [00:06:26] So, currently I'm a professional player and teacher. My background started when I was seven as a Suzuki student. And having gone through Suzuki training taught by Suzuki-certified teachers, having gone to Suzuki Institutes and camps, to Suzuki international camps, and having studied with Dr. Suzuki at the international ones in group settings. And then branching off of Suzuki. At probably around Book Six, having gone into the repertoire and into camps that were non-Suzuki-based and non-Suzuki-based teachers. That would have been middle school, high school years. Eventually getting into college and having studied with in my undergrad three different, let's see one, two, three, four different professors during my undergrad and then during my master's degree three different professors at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. Along the way, probably my most influential teacher was the teacher that helped me realize that performance was what I wanted to do and was interested in doing and could be successful with the right guidance. And that advice led me to transferring to [public university in the Northwest,] where I started with [violin professor at same university] after having had a year with [different violin professor at same university.] So, I came into [public university,] had [first violin professor] for one year. I studied with him privately, attended the performance studio of Joe Genualdi, who was also a violin professor then. [Redacted.] I studied with [second violin professor] for two years before graduating and going to University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, where I studied with Kurt Sassmanshaus and Piotr Milewski and Dorothy DeLay. And that was good, good timing I would say. A pivotal time for me after deciding music was what I wanted to do was working with [second violin professor,] who really helped me understand and prioritize technical work. And

moving beyond her then was putting a lot of sequential organization into technical learning and relaying and that was through my work with Sassmanshaus and DeLay. So that was, that was my learning, my study trajectory in a nutshell. As a professional, a lot of my teaching has been influenced by observing other teachers and talking to at length other teachers attending workshops and masterclasses. And then probably the most significant of all my influences is the learning I do through practical work of teaching and learning through my own students.

TR: [00:09:56] And just a quick clarifying question. Were you studying pedagogy or performance with Sassmannshaus during your time at Cincinnati?

Ken: [00:10:11] Good question. I did a master's in performance, violin performance there. And during that time, I was asked by Sassmannshaus to take a pedagogy course that he taught, and then following up from that was asked to do some teaching for him. So, it would have been under his guidance during that period of teaching for him as well.

TR: [00:10:37] Was it teaching undergraduate students?

Ken: [00:10:41] It was teaching students in the Starling String Project, and he had a program within that program, within that project called Starling Kids, which was a beginner method, which was really a test or a pilot program to test his method before it was published.

TR: [00:11:10] What are the factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Ken: [00:11:18] I would say when I'm choosing repertoire for students, I take into consideration their technical ability, their musical expressive abilities, their stylistic awareness, and their intellectual level: what they understand about music and about technique and the way they work. And in addition to that, I would also include their

own awareness of kind of being mindful of where they're happy and what they're needing to do and how they're doing it. Mindfulness in practice is a big thing for me. If they like the repertoire, obviously it's very helpful. And then I would add to that, if there's a sense of competitiveness that helps: meaning, if there's an appropriate piece that meets all that other criteria for me and it helps them feel that they're playing something that gives them a little bit of an advantage possibly over others. If that's something that motivates them in a healthy way, in a positive way, then that's helpful.

TR: [00:12:37] And to what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Ken: [00:12:43] Highly, highly. I never have. I'm not a cookie-cutter teacher that has all of their students play all the same repertoire in the same order. Never are any two of my students having taken the same path through repertoire choices.

TR: [00:13:03] So how do you relate the repertoire to the student's home or school life, if you do so?

Ken: [00:13:15] Say that again, sorry.

TR: [00:13:15] How do you relate the repertoire to the student's home or school life, if you do that, since you said you personalize so much?

Ken: [00:13:25] Yeah I, sometimes... This may answer another question, too.

Ken: [00:13:30] Sometimes a student will have a cultural background that we may explore repertoire with and to help motivate them. For instance, I have a Taiwanese student. My 7-year-old student right now got very excited when we started working on a piece that was a traditional Chinese folk song and that really motivated her. She knew the words, and she knew the meaning. Her parents had sung it to her when she was young, and she sings it to them. And in fact, that was just a lesson last night. And I was really, really inspired to see how motivated she was by them. So, I think that would

answer their home life. And in fact, it really motivated the parents' engagement into her learning as well.

TR: [00:14:20] Would you say that parent engagement or parent opinion has any impact on your repertoire choices?

Ken: [00:14:32] That's a great question. They, parents, often try. Not often. Some parents try, and I very infrequently allow it to influence my decisions. Although, parents are the best resource to knowing what a student, how a student is feeling, and what keeps them motivated and happy. And so, I'll certainly listen to them and take their advice. But when a parent is suggesting repertoire for the sake of competitiveness or one-upping another student, I see that as highly inappropriate. I don't engage in those conversations. And I'll explain to them if the piece is out of the spectrum of what they need to be working on now.

Ken: [00:15:20] And sometimes I'll explain to the parent that these are great choices and selections that they have when it is not yet appropriate. And to tell them to create a wish list, and that we'll revisit that when the time is right.

TR: [00:15:36] It sounds like a nice compromise, so that everybody feels heard. Do you have a teaching philosophy? And if so, describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose?

Ken: [00:15:51] I do. And for follow-up you might, I have it [redacted]. And for follow up, you might see it there, but I can, I can read off of that. [Redacted.] It's a teaching philosophy page on that.

Ken: [00:16:11] So, I have as my kind of guiding description here is, I say: my role as teacher is to guide students to becoming inquisitive, independent, and self-aware learners. I strive to provide a sound technical, musical, and intellectual education for my

students guided by a set of philosophical principles. Every aspect of my teaching method can be related to training of self-confidence.

Ken: [00:16:36] So within that, those principles are also on my website and they include individuality, technical foundation, time management, learning how to learn, and performance opportunities students have and create for themselves. And each one of those has some kind of wording behind it. It's designed to kind of give people an insight into how I think about my teaching. It might provide a little bit more detail that you might be looking for.

TR: [00:17:15] Okay, thanks. And is this self-confidence and time management and intellectual skills, learning how to learn. Is this just for music or are you hoping that they take it from the studio and to other areas of their life too?

Ken: [00:17:33] Yeah, that's exactly right. And my, you know I wouldn't have thought this when I was fresh out of master's degree, and it kind of crept in and took over in terms of my own philosophy. But I see that the violin is the vehicle or the medium from which we connect--myself and the student. And I know perfectly well that someday that medium, or that vehicle that the violin is, may not exist anymore in their lives as they go on to other things. But they are different, and they are changed through that process of having spent that time with it. And that's really my goal, and it doesn't undermine the value or the quality of the work that we do. And in fact, it informs how important it is. And so all of those skills or all those guiding principles for myself are things that are transferable beyond the violin.

TR: [00:18:35] How do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your student's skill level?

Ken: [00:18:40] Very important, really, really important, and this was very much a DeLay philosophy that you work on technical foundation--delaying the basics, and those are worked on outside of the repertoire. And that's really unique for her and for

the way that she taught versus many other approaches where technique is learned through the pieces. And so I take where a student is in their technical development as a very important guide to choosing repertoire. So, the repertoire fits comfortably within that. It may extend it, in that it may combine several of those techniques or take a technical skill and really focus on it or emphasize it more, or faster with it, or challenge it even more. But the core technical facility has been developed before the repertoire is chosen.

TR: [00:19:48] Okay. And decide, if applicable, the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice.

Ken: [00:20:00] Pressures would be parent ones.

Ken: [00:20:04] The constraints would be all of the factors that influence my choice. So that would be: the technical ability, the musical and interpretive ability of the student, intellectual, stylistic awareness, whether they like it, and whether it's something that helps them, motivates them through a sense of competition.

Ken: [00:20:36] All of those things are things that are constrained to me. If they are technically not ready to play a piece, then it's a constraint. If they're technically ready, then it's not. And the same could be said for all of those other principles.

Ken: [00:20:52] What other challenges would we have besides that?

Ken: [00:20:59] I think sometimes students, they may have all of those things, and I may decide that a repertoire meets all the criteria. And they like it, but they're just not motivated or they're distracted. And that's where time management comes in. All of the things may be aligned, and they may be having other challenges in their lives. That has nothing to do with the violin or the choice of repertoire, and they're just not energized to be spending time with their instrument. So, those are things that have to come into the decision making process and you know, you try to do the best you can. Knowing what

the mood of the student is when you make those decisions, but life changes and things change along the way.

Ken: [00:21:45] Yeah.

TR: [00:21:47] So how do you make your decision if you and the student do not agree on repertoire?

Ken: [00:21:54] Sometimes I will suggest several options to a student, and I will send sheet music and links to recordings or videos, and say, "Tell me which one you like." Sometimes I know for sure, and in that way they have some buy-in to it. Very much so that's a personality and mood decision, based on my awareness of where the student's at and what mood and personality the student has. And other times, I know that a student will accept anything that I recommend to them, and then I watch to see how much they like it or how they respond to it.

Ken: [00:22:35] But if we don't agree on something, then, and I see that it's a real resistance, I'll first try by trying to inspire them with different recordings or some historical context or explain why it's important, and we'll spend, you know may spend a lesson or two on it. But if there's real resistance, then I have to move in a different direction and choose something else. But I would say that that's pretty rare when we get to that point. Usually by the time the student has had several repertoire suggestions from me, they see that it's a journey with each piece and each learning experience. And they trust that process, and they know that it may not be the journey that they're aware of what it's going to be in the beginning, but they trust in it, and they find the enjoyment as they go.

TR: [00:23:34] Has the repertoire that you teach changed over time, and why or why not?

Ken: [00:23:38] Very much so. Why? Because I'm always looking for repertoire that fills the gaps between different things. For technical gaps in between pieces, musical gaps, stylistic gaps, but also overlaps as well. And there may be one piece that I know teaches one particular aspect really well. But then I've taught it, you know six times in the last six months, and I'm a little bit tired of it. So, I'm always looking for options. Or maybe, maybe I have taught it for six times in the last six months, and I don't mind doing it again, but I know that I've got two other options which will do the job. So, I'll offer the student all three and see which one they choose. But my repertoire choices are always expanding. And I get really excited when I find something new and I know where it fits and how it's going to help fill those gaps.

TR: [00:24:47] So, that basically answers the next question, but are there any particularly influential people, experiences, or realizations that prompted these changes?

Ken: [00:25:04] I can look back in my early days of teaching and see mistakes that I made in assigning repertoire. And sometimes that was because the choices I was making then were by too big of leaps between repertoire selections. So, I needed more sequential order of developing things along the way. The mistake was that it took the student too long to learn it.

Ken: [00:25:38] And that's, this is slightly off topic, but I think this is very worthy of filling in there. There's this bell-shaped curve of keeping the student interested, and you hope to reach the peak of that bell, that curve, when the student is performing the piece, or something that matters: whether it be an audition, or an exam, or just a public performance. If that comes too soon, then they're not competent with it, and they're not totally on top of it. If it comes too late, then they're bored of it, and it's lacking spark. So, the important thing is that if the repertoire is too difficult for them or mixes too many of those criteria, then they never reach their potential before they get bored of it.

Ken: [00:26:30] And so that's why I'm carefully choosing repertoire that kind of fast-tracks their learning so they can get on to it. The way I describe it, "if we can fast track

the technical learning, the building basics piece, then that means we can get on to the new areas of learning which are going to be more of the stylistic and the musical and expressive. And if we spend too long on the technical learning, then you really never spend any of that time in the expressive portions."

TR: [00:26:58] Which is why you separate the technical learning from the repertoire?

Ken: [00:27:03] Yes, although that's a double-edged sword, because you can kind of, I call it "sterilizing a student spiritually." If you get stuck doing the "technique technique technique," you never really you never turn on the creative side. And so again you have to, that's why it's so important to. And this was DeLay's philosophy. I believe I never discussed it with her, but I kind of inherited it by osmosis. If you separate the technical and musical, then you're able to engage the musical at a much earlier point.

Ken: [00:27:38] The opposite philosophy is that you're always working on musical. The techniques serve the music, and yes that's true. Although, it's very common for a student to be stuck in the creative and musical world and have really no ability to pay attention to the technical side. So, that's, that's a little bit scary as well, because we need both. We need to be tidy as well as we need to be expressive.

Ken: [00:28:05] And that changes. I'll flip that sometimes if I have a student who is motivated by the musical side and needs to work on the technical. And I'll experiment and sometimes I'll come from the technical perspective. And if that doesn't work, I'll come from the musical one, and therefore prove what needs to be done to make that work from a technical area. But I typically take the, usually we take the technical approach first.

TR: [00:28:37] Okay. So you already said that you teach new repertoire all the time. How often do you teach repertoire that you have never previously learned yourself, and why do you choose to teach it?

Ken: [00:28:49] I teach repertoire that I haven't played myself quite often. You know, at beginner and intermediate levels. That's fun, and I explore all kinds of things. Although, I don't do it randomly. Meaning: I don't just try something that I don't know. I spend some time looking at it, and listening to it, and playing through it to make sure that it is what I need it to be for students.

Ken: [00:29:19] With advanced repertoire, I will also do that as well. I haven't, certainly haven't played everything. And I do introduce things to students that I haven't played, and we you know we spend time learning it together. And it becomes a fun journey. And sometimes the students know if I haven't played it and I'll tell them, and sometimes they don't and we're learning it together.

Ken: [00:29:44] I recently had an interesting experience where I was asked to perform a piece with orchestra, a Beethoven Romance, one of the Romances in F Major. And I had actually never learned it, and I was playing it with orchestra, and I had taught it tons and tons of times. And so I made all the technical and musical decisions through my teaching. Well, when I went to perform it for the first time, I had learned it for the first time with the intention of performing it. It was a really different experience of learning the piece, because I had already charted the path of technical and musical decisions. And the interesting thing was, you know, probably 90 percent of the decisions that I'd already made in teaching flowed through into my playing. But when I played it myself, there were things that definitely had changed, and when I teach it again the next time, it'll be different.

TR: [00:30:42] So, from where do you get the idea to expand the repertoire that you teach?

Ken: [00:30:49] From boredom.

TR: [00:30:53] Okay.

Ken: [00:30:53] Yeah. I mean that's a lot of it. There's, you know, I love teaching Mozart, and I love teaching Mozart concertos. But you know, I think last year I had three or four students playing the G Major Concerto. So I needed to expand for my own sanity what I was doing. And sometimes it was, "Okay we're going to do a Mozart sonata instead of the concerto or find something else Classical." So that's a motivator to find other repertoire.

Ken: [00:31:30] And the other ones would certainly be, you know that's the overlap. You know, how do I find other repertoire to do the same thing that I would have done with another piece? And the other one is to fill more gaps. I think again back to the [unclear] the mistakes I made in repertoire choices early on as a teacher trying to fill those gaps.

TR: [00:31:54] So what resources do you use or access when you select repertoire, in general, not just new repertoire?

Ken: [00:32:05] So, I'll answer that as a second part of the answer. So, less directly. When I was in New Zealand, I, so I spent 12 years there teaching. And my time in New Zealand was spent as professor at a university. And Commonwealth countries subscribed very religiously to exam syllabus systems. The British systems are the Trinity School of Music and Associated Board School. Associated School. Associated Board. A-B. Of Royal Schools of Music. ABRSN. And they're very highly regimented systems where students take from Grade One.

Ken: [00:32:58] Some of them have a preliminary grade as a beginner, all the way through the Eighth Grade which is then considered university-level standard, to then some of what they call diploma-level exams which go through a professional level.

Ken: [00:33:14] And these exams that the British system send out an examiner a couple times a year, and the teachers submit their students to these exams. And then literally a month or two later a report comes from England. And the students, and the teachers,

and the parents see how well the student did. And that system is really infused in the music education culture.

Ken: [00:33:40] And it's really unfortunate, because it's a very uncreative way of teaching and learning, because it's so highly regimented and highly programmatic in terms of the selection of repertoire. So, students have a very limited number of pieces that they can play at every level. And it is quite possible if a student did the minimal level of work for those, the student would come for a college audition having played only 24 pieces in their life. They just did exams. Now that would be an extreme case. But that's the problem.

Ken: [00:34:18] I was having students, private students, come to me when I was teaching college there, saying, "You know, I'm wanting to do level 'whatever' exam. You know, can you help me?" And I told my students I needed a year to try to understand the systems. And I discovered that there was an Australian version of it that was much better. The British ones are very poorly organized, pedagogically organized. In many cases, they seem to be an avenue for promoting British music, in some cases contemporary music. So, that's creating work for composers. It misses standard repertoire. There's very, very little standard repertoire at times chosen in there.

Ken: [00:35:10] Alternatively, the Australians have a system called the Australian Music Examinations Board. And they're pedagogically-based on American pedagogical research. Rolland and Ivan Galamian influenced a lot of the things that flowed through to that. So, very, very well-thought out, very extensive repertoire choice list. It's very good.

Ken: [00:35:38] I was brought on board as a curriculum advisor and for violin and an examiner. And I did a lot of examining and workshop coaching for teachers around Australia, New Zealand, and then Southeast Asia: so Indonesia and Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong. And I did quite a bit of work there. And so that

influenced--the nice thing is that it gave flexibility and creativity to teachers, whereas the British systems had less of that happening.

Ken: [00:36:17] The thing that really influenced my thinking and my philosophy was seeing teachers under the influence of examination systems who had completely turned off their own creative resource. They weren't thinking outside of the box, because the box was created for them. And it really, really broke my heart to see this and to see the negative impact on the students.

Ken: [00:36:43] Back to my cookie-cutter comment. Students were all being squeezed through this machine, but they're all individuals, so they all have different minds and different spirts and different bodies and different moods, and I really believe that repertoire needs to serve that. And if you take that out of the equation, then you really see these very disengaged musically and creatively students and teachers.

Ken: [00:37:14] So, that was that was highly influential on my pedagogical thinking at a time which was really important for me. I was just starting my professional teaching career. So, that's a big resource that I use: the Australian one, the Australian Music Examinations Board repertoire list. By now, I have a long list of things that I use myself. I don't actually have it in list format, but I have a lot of music scanned in my Dropbox, so that's kind of my repertoire list. But I also use, I don't know if you've heard of the ASTACAP: ASTA, American String Teacher Association Certification Advancement Program. And have you seen that list of repertoire that they have?

TR: [00:38:04] Yes.

Ken: [00:38:05] You know, this is an American attempt at the important thing that the British and Australian systems were trying to do was to come up with a system that motivated, and rewarded, and provided feedback for students, teachers, and parents, and educators. And I think it's a really interesting psychological or social statement that is at the bottom of the American one, a cultural statement more than anything. At the bottom

of the repertoire list on the ASTA one, for each level it says--so this is a big list of repertoire and at the bottom it says, "Teachers may select other repertoire which they feel is at the appropriate level for their students." And I thought, "That's so empowering." We know that's so empowering for the teacher to make their own decisions rather than be so highly prescriptive. And if you think about it, you know that is a difference in cultures between England and the US. Just that statement there.

Ken: [00:39:18] Having said that, the ASTA one is a little bit Lucy-goosey, and it needs a little bit tightening up. Perhaps that's just my influence with the other extreme side. So I used the ASTA list quite extensively as a reference. Barbara Barber's list, which is the supplement to Suzuki repertoire. I used to study with her at summer school, so I have been influenced by her. Kurt Sassmannshaus has a list on violinmasterclass.com, although it's not truly sequential at all. There's a lot of gaps in there. And so I find that all of these combined together are really very complementary to each other. I do reference the British system as well.

Ken: [00:40:07] I'm just looking for things. I'm always scouring, looking. There's a good list off of, I think Mimi Zweig has one, but there's a good one that comes off of Indiana. What is it? Indiana String Academy, the summer academy. That was put together was [unclear] repertoire. Those are my go-to ones.

TR: [00:40:37] And then why do you think the ASTACAP list is Lucy-goosey or needs tightening up? Is it the sequence or something else?

Ken: [00:40:49] Yeah, so I have been an examiner for ASTACAP for three or four years now. I have students doing it now, so I recuse myself. And every once in a while, I have a question, you know, that's just unclear. It says, "Bruch Concerto." Does it mean the whole thing or just first movement? So, there's just some issues with that. What I like about ASTACAP is that they're pretty good about what the examiner should comment on. They're pretty clear with that. But in terms of a system in terms of how it's

marketed and communication to parents and teachers and students, they do a very poor job of that.

Ken: [00:41:42] Their website is... it is a train wreck. It's just, I think it's the core. It's very clearly put together by very knowledgeable and experienced teachers and musicians, and really needs to be wrapped up. And how do you promote it and communicate it. And I know they are working on it on the national level, but I think it has good potential, as long as they don't go down the road too far of being too prescriptive.

TR: [00:42:19] I'm going to skip a question. So, obviously personalization is really important to you, but are there any pieces that you always teach or never teach based on a student's skill level or other factors? Age?

Ken: [00:42:37] Yeah, definitely. I have in my mind, with all of my students that at any age and level, I have in my mind that a student is capable of doing violin at college, if they so choose, whether it be just taking lessons while they're doing another unrelated degree to music or performance. And so I don't at all try to put any limitation on a student's future potential with repertoire at any level.

Ken: [00:43:20] And with that in mind, I know there's certain repertoire that they need to have under their belt by the time they get there. So, you know, there's one of the other repertoire lists that I use is Dorothy DeLay's concerto sequence. So, I know that, you know the ideal coming-into-college level will be playing Bruch G Minor. Now that's not often the case that we see that. And so I want to make sure that the student's on a path to being at that level.

Ken: [00:43:54] But I will spend time working on things, included with that would be Mozart G Major Concerto. I would, before I even get there, I'll be spending time working on things but much easier and much time-manageable levels to teach the style and the technical needs of classical repertoire. Same thing with Bruch. So, there are

certain pieces that I want to make sure that all my students play at some point. And there's a lot of--the pathway to that will be very broad and diverse and different for every student. But at some point, yes all students will need to play a certain repertoire in their lives depending on how far they take it.

TR: [00:44:41] Okay, thanks. Your answers have been really detailed and rich. Thanks for putting so much thought into them. Is there anything else that you want to add?

Ken: [00:44:54] Oh. I could tell you [unclear]. No, you covered everything.

Erin.2019-01-13

TR: [00:02:00] And do you consent?

Erin: [00:02:00] Yes, I do.

TR: [00:02:02] Okay. How many years have you taught in the studio setting?

Erin: [00:02:07] I believe I've been teaching privately about 25 years.

TR: [00:02:11] Okay. And did you teach when you were in high school or college?

Erin: [00:02:17] My piano teacher. I'm a violinist. But I also took piano, and my piano teacher had like a, like a little program where we would tutor the younger students. So, I didn't quite teach, but it was kind of how I got into it. But once I got into college, I was part of a teaching program that they had there, so that's when I started officially teaching.

TR: [00:02:40] So, does the 25 years count the years in college too?

Erin: [00:02:45] Yes.

TR: [00:02:46] Okay. How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Erin: [00:02:53] So, the most I've ever had was 60, and right now is the probably the lowest I've had, and that's 12.

TR: [00:03:01] Okay. And then what is about the average number of students?

Erin: [00:03:12] Usually it's somewhere between 20. Right now, it's so much lower, because they just do a lot of other things that I didn't used to do before.

TR: [00:03:21] And then, sorry, I didn't quite hear you correctly. Did you say 60 or 50?

Erin: [00:03:26] No, the most I've had is 60. Because all I did was private teaching and playing in symphony. And then, lately, because I am a middle school orchestra teacher as well. So, I do that and have a smaller studio now.

TR: [00:03:50] Please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Erin: [00:03:57] My youngest right now is four-years-old, and she is what they call like a pre-Twinkler. She's just basically learning how to have good posture. She's on a violin box, so she doesn't even have the instrument yet. She's been playing for maybe two months. I mean: she's been having lessons for two months.

Erin: [00:04:17] My oldest now is a junior in high school, and he does participate in State, Region, so he could play from the Rode etudes. But his piece right now that he's working on for Solo and Ensemble is the Handel Sonata. And last year, I graduated two students who both majored in music. But that was last year.

TR: [00:04:43] Can you describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach? This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

Erin: [00:04:58] So, I grew up as a Suzuki method student, so I always had that as an influence. And then most of my teachers--I believe all of them--they studied with Ivan Galamian. So, that was a huge influence in the way I think and the way I teach posture.

Erin: [00:05:18] And then when I finished--where did I finish? When I finished my master's, I then went for teacher long-term training in Wisconsin at Stevens Point for Suzuki training. And that's a two-year program, and that's why they call it long-term. Like, I go two, three times a week for training, lecture, observation, and then you start teaching yourself and they're watching you. So, it's a little different than the short-term that they offer at institutes, which are only like a week or so. So, that was a huge influence, and I knew I wanted to be a Suzuki teacher and that's what I declare as being, is a Suzuki teacher right now.

TR: [00:06:06] What are the factors that are most important to you in choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Erin: [00:06:13] I use the Suzuki method. So, I do go through the repertoire. In addition to that, if I see a student struggling in some kind of skill or reading or anything like that, then I will use some supplemental materials. I like to use Barbara Barber's Solos for [Young] Violinists or something like that that's written. I like that one a lot. I'm always open to something new. Sometimes if I have to, I'll write my own. Sometimes I'll use

Essential Elements, which is a book that I use at the middle school to help out. So, I really individualize what I do for each child's needs.

TR: [00:07:00] And about what proportion would you say is Suzuki repertoire, and what proportion is supplemental or other musical material?

Erin: [00:07:11] Ninety percent is the repertoire itself. So, I do go through the repertoire, and then in addition, there will be like method books, like etudes and that sort of thing, so that, maybe that's 10 percent of it.

TR: [00:07:25] Do you have a teaching philosophy? And if so, describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose.

Erin: [00:07:32] So, a lot of it is going to sound what is the Suzuki methodology and philosophy, which is that we believe "Every child can." That you have to partner with the parent in order to have success with the child. So, it's like a triangle: you work with the child and the parent.

Erin: [00:07:50] So, everybody's working together to see what would be successful for that child and what's everybody's goals. Also, like when they're starting out, I do what's called the Mother Tongue Method. So, they start learning by rote. Everything is by memory for quite some time, and it depends on their age. If I start a student that's later, like let's say a 10-year-old, I will probably introduce reading a lot earlier than the four-year-old that I'm teaching right now. I'm not sure when the four-year-old will start reading. It just depends on her age and when she's actually reading, so that's a huge influence. But a lot of it is the... I even use it at the middle school. It's: "Every child can." So if a child is struggling, then I need to find a way or a supplemental way of helping that child gain that skill, even if it takes longer. And I go at the pace of the child.

TR: [00:08:43] Okay. So, you already touched on this a little bit. But to what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Erin: [00:08:53] I would say each one of them has their own personalized repertoire. Even the ones that have no struggles, and they fly through all those Suzuki method books. I will still put in a piece here and there from another methodology book or reading book, because just to solidify a skill that I think that they need, because everybody needs something.

Erin: [00:09:20] Yes, I would say I personalize all my students.

TR: [00:09:23] And how do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your student's skill level?

Erin: [00:09:28] So, the way I teach, I try to have their warm-up or scales or the etudes or just like finger exercises even when they're small to be ahead of their repertoire. So, I

don't use the repertoire as the first time to introduce a skill. And then the way the Suzuki method works as well that I use I will do a preview of the next piece, of the hardest spot, while they're working on a previous piece. So, that becomes like their little etude or their little skill to work on while they're working on a piece.

Erin: [00:10:14] Because my goal is that they learn their repertoire at a really high level of mastery. I want them to play beautifully and learn skills that way with great tone and an appreciation for beautiful music rather than just get them through the music. So, that's why their etudes and stuff may be ahead of what their repertoire is. But it's always very, very short.

Erin: [00:10:40] I recently discovered a methodology book for exercises by, I think it's William Starr, and it's called like 77 Variations on Suzuki, and it's like really short, three-line etudes, and they get really complicated. And I will give that to my students. So, once they get to that repertoire, they already know how to do that stuff, and they're not struggling or being frustrated.

TR: [00:11:09] Can you tell me more about the Starr book and how you discovered it and why you decided to look for more resources?

Erin: [00:11:19] Uh sure. Actually, I have it right next to me. I forgot. Seventy-Seven Variations on Suzuki Melodies: Technique Builders for Violin by William Starr. I'm always looking for books. I go to the Suzuki convention, ASTA convention, over here the Texas Music Educators Convention. And I'm always looking through books, and I'm always looking for the latest thing.

Erin: [00:11:42] And I just remember, growing up, I would be given this whole-page etude and be frustrated or bored, or you know, just.... It wasn't any fun. And then I would get my students books like the Introducing the Positions by Harvey Whistler. And I could tell like halfway through the etude, "They're done. They don't want to do this anymore." And they would comply, because I asked them to. They were awesome, but I just remember that it was no fun.

Erin: [00:12:13] And then I found this book, and it's literally maybe four or five lines. And then when it gets more complicated, it's a page. But the page is not even anywhere near where you would see other etude books. So, I'm able to teach them a really complicated skill that's short, and they have time to master it. And it's written really well, because it's divided into sections. Like one section is vibrato, then double stops, and then finger action, harmonics, bowing technique, and then positions, shifting, and then really advanced technique where you get to put all this stuff together. So, I really like it. It's really successful with my students, and they don't lose interest as fast. Sometimes they do, and then I'll pull out like the Whistler, and then they go, "No, we'll go back," because they appreciate that it's short, and they're able to master something more quickly.

TR: [00:13:05] Okay. How do you make your decision if you and a student do not agree on repertoire?

Erin: [00:13:14] Yes, that happens. Sometimes if the student did not fly through the Suzuki books and they might be going into high school, then they start feeling sometimes like, "Oh this is a baby thing. You know I want to be out of these books." I try to explain--I mean, I'm pretty upfront with them why I'm using the Suzuki method. This is not a baby thing. This is just a way of teaching. And then I explain my philosophy. Like, if they're learning to be a teacher themselves. And I'll tell them, "This piece teaches you this skill which helps you into the next piece." And when they see how it's a stepwise method, then they're more willing to go through the repertoire.

Erin: [00:13:55] And then actually at that point, when they're that frustrated, they actually do start practicing more. At least, that's how my experience has been. And they get through it, and then they're able to go out of the books because they've finished.

Erin: [00:14:08] Now, if I have a child, that it's not their fault--like maybe they have a learning disability or they try really hard, and they just can't get out of, you know, Book Two, and they're getting into high school, which that does happen--then I will give them supplemental pieces so they don't feel like they're stuck. Even if it's short little pieces, like the out of the Barbara Barber books. And then they don't feel so frustrated. So yes, I do stick to the method, but not to the point of frustrating and discouraging my students.

TR: [00:14:35] Okay. And you already answered this question for the Starr book, but what resources do you use more generally when selecting repertoire? Or access?

Erin: [00:14:46] So, the Starr one is a big one. I use the Doflein Method for note reading I use Level One, the Volume One. And then, sometimes that's it. And depending on the student, sometimes I go all the way to Volume Three, but I usually don't go beyond Volume Three.

Erin: [00:15:03] I also use--what is the name? I should've brought this one. There's a double stop book that I love to use. I can look it up later. I have everything right now in the car, but I forgot that one. I can email you what that one is. There's a great one with double stops that I like.

Erin: [00:15:26] Let's see. I will use the Carl Flesch scale system, even though I really like the Galamian version. I've noticed that my students who go on into college, they really want them to do the Carl Flesch, so I changed to Carl Flesch so they don't have a shock if they continue and go into college. And I said the Barbara Barber.

Erin: [00:15:49] And then, oh how could I miss this one? So, I use Laurie Scott's and Bill Dick's Mastery for Strings. And those are basically just exercises to learn the fingerboard geography. And I do that at a really early age. There's this song that the kids learn before even "Twinkle" called "Monkey Song." And, for an example, on the A

string: it's A-B-C-sharp-D. Then they go backwards D-C-sharp-B-A. When they learn it, they learn it with words, because they're usually pretty young when they start this.

Erin: [00:16:20] So, we go with the words, and they play through it up and down, and they think it's fun. And then, once I know they know it very, very well, we put in the letter names. And I call it "Advanced Monkey Song." And so now they're going "A-B-C-sharp-D" and then going backwards. Then, when I know they can do that, I move their second finger to a Low Two right away and then, I'm like, "Okay, now this is the "Really Advanced Monkey Song," and now you're going to learn C-natural." They just think it's so awesome. So, now it's A-B-C-natural-C-sharp-D. And then going backwards. And they have finger patterns for High Threes, Fours, Low One. And they just love it. And I'm doing that all through almost Volume One, so by the time they get to a High Three in "Minuet Two," I believe is the first time they play a High Three, they've already been doing that, and they're not in shock and it doesn't take as long to teach it to them.

Erin: [00:17:14] Oh, I also like to use fiddle tunes. I just collect fiddle tunes from all. I'm lucky here in [city in Texas], but it's like all kinds of musicians here, and I have friends who give me music. They don't even have authors on it. You know, it's just music. So, they like that too. So I'll use a lot of fiddle music for fun.

TR: [00:17:34] Okay. Do you teach any repertoire--you already mentioned fiddle just now--that you or others might consider non-traditional, and why or why not?

Erin: [00:17:45] Well, I use the fiddle tunes a lot of times, because the kids like them. And they're pretty hard, actually, and that's a great way to get them to be playing slurs, playing faster.

Erin: [00:17:56] So, I really like using those. There's one by Martin Norgaard that introduces jazz. I'm not as comfortable with playing jazz myself. But it's a CD that you just basically repeat all these rhythms, and they get better at it than I am. But it's really cool, because they're already being taught with the Suzuki method to learn orally, so all they do is listen to the rhythms, and they start copying it.

Erin: [00:18:28] And then if they're interested, especially if I have students who are of Hispanic descent, I'll even pull out mariachi music. And they really like learning like "De Colores," one of the simpler ones. If they're advanced, I'll give them something like "La Bamba," and they really like that. So, I try to tailor it to what they like.

Erin: [00:18:47] And there has been times that I have a student who's, like, in a lull. And I do it almost with everybody in the summer. I'm like, "Tell me: what fun piece do you want?"And a lot of times they pick fiddle or mariachi, and then every so often I'll have a kid say anime, and then they tell me what anime, and then I've got to go learn it myself and I'll write it down and give it to them. So, I try to let them have fun with their instrument, because it's not just about learning the notes, and this strict repertoire wants them to enjoy playing their instrument and realize, "You can do this anywhere." I will

also use religious hymns. I have a couple families that their children play at church. So, they'll ask me to teach them hymns. So we'll do that as a reading or a supplement.

Erin: [00:19:31] So, yes, just the whole range of whatever my students' needs and interests are.

TR: [00:19:38] Describe, if applicable, the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire.

Erin: [00:19:48] So, I would say the biggest thing: Texas is a very different state. I'm not from here, so it was a bit of a shock. They very much like students to play repertoire that you would never think of giving them. One time, the All-State etude was Don Juan, not a watered-down version, the Don Juan. Like why. You know. And then some of these etudes, I'm like, "I didn't do this until I was in college." You know, and they're expected to do that. The Class One solos, I mean, they include the Tchaikovsky. And I understand that some students are at that level, and that's great. But there's almost a really high expectation for the majority of the kids to be doing this.

Erin: [00:20:40] Some--you know, I'm not going to criticize my colleagues. I mean, some of them can pull this off with no problem. It just depends on the teacher. It depends on the student. But sometimes I feel, especially when they're trying out for these things, that they're doing things that I don't think they're ready for. But I go with it, because I don't want them to lose interest. I know they really want to. And I'll teach them, and they'll get successful at it. I just, sometimes a whole month will be dedicated to an etude, and I feel like it slows down the process because we're so focused on that etude. So that's one thing that I find a little frustrating here. At the same time, it's cool because then they got to play this really cool etude or this really cool excerpt. So I guess it's a catch-22.

TR: [00:21:34] Just to clarify: You're spending lesson time on pieces that you wouldn't choose if they had not been required for a state competition?

Erin: [00:21:47] Correct.

TR: [00:21:50] Has the repertoire that you teach changed over time, and why or why not?

Erin: [00:21:58] Oh yeah, totally. Every time I learn something new. Then I came here for my doctorate in Texas, which is why I'm down here. And then my mentor, [music education faculty], she really opened up my eyes to different kinds of repertoire, different ways to teach. I do continue my own education. I go to workshops with the Suzuki method or I go to these conferences, and I'm always listening and trying to learn something new. So I'm always evolving, and I don't believe you should just "have it and you're done," and "you're never going to change or grow." So, yeah, I'm constantly changing things. I'm constantly trying something new. I'm constantly introducing a skill

a little bit earlier, even if it's watered down or broken down, just to make it easier for the students when they get to that time to play that high-level skill.

TR: [00:22:52] And you already sort of answered this, but are there any specific people, experiences, or realizations that were either significant to making this change or strengthened your belief that your existing repertoire was a good fit for your studio?

Erin: [00:23:07] My mentors have helped me a lot. The first one is, well, my private teachers were a huge deal. [Renowned applied faculty], I studied with in my master's-- Joe Genualdi with my undergrad, and then my teacher-training was Pat D'Ercole, who's just amazing. And then, of course here in Texas, I have [three influential Suzuki teacher trainers]. These are people who have just done great research and great contributions to music and music education. And I'm so lucky that I got to be here and study with these people. So yeah, they're my big influences.

TR: [00:23:55] And how often do you teach repertoire that you have never previously learned yourself?

Erin: [00:24:08] Oh, it sounds conceited to say, "I've played it all." [Pause.] I'm sure I run into stuff. I'm talking about, uh, thinking out loud.

Erin: [00:24:24] I would say sometimes I have to teach the kids some of the etudes. I haven't done every (emphasis) single etude, so that will be new for me. That's probably the only time I really run into something I've never taught.

Erin: [00:24:39] Yeah. So etudes for All-State or Region.

TR: [00:24:45] And then why do you...? So, it's just for a competition's sake that you would do it?

Erin: [00:24:52] That I would choose those pieces?

TR: [00:24:54] Yeah.

Erin: [00:24:57] No, if there was ever a piece that they-- like let's say if something was commissioned and it's new and the kids wanted to do it, I would be open to teaching them that. I would totally be open to that. It just seems that the only time I run into it is for competition.

TR: [00:25:11] Oh okay. And are there other places from where you get the idea to expand the repertoire that you teach? That you've never previously learned yourself?

Erin: [00:25:28] I'm sorry. Rephrase the question.

TR: [00:25:31] So the last part of that question is, "from where do you get the idea to expand the repertoire that you teach that you've never previously learned yourself?"

Erin: [00:25:39] Oh. Okay. Talking to my mentors, talking to my colleagues, like your professor, [music education faculty]. Just collaborating with other teachers. I'm really good--I'm really lucky that I've stayed good friends with almost everyone I've gone to school with all these years. So, we're always talking. We're always sharing. Our mentors--all our mentors taught us to "Share what you know, don't keep it to yourself." So, we already have a really good community of talking to each other and asking questions. We're not afraid to tell someone, "I'm stuck. I don't know what I'm doing. Help me out." Yeah. I'm really lucky to have that group of friends.

TR: [00:26:19] That's great. Do you keep a repertoire list and are there any pieces that you always teach or never teach based on a student's skill, age level, or other factors?

Erin: [00:26:35] I do have a list. I'd be happy to email it to you.

Erin: [00:26:50] As far as Suzuki goes, I go through all the pieces, even if a child who has difficulty doing something, we find a way. Either we'll come back to it, or we break it apart in a different way. But--even with my children with disabilities--they've been able to get through all those pieces.

Erin: [00:27:10] I may or may not give them the Barbara Barber books. That might be too much for that student. I may not get to fiddling. Again, this is more [unclear] my students who have a disability of some sort. But I still try to give them even a short little fiddle piece, because I don't want him to feel, "Oh everyone's learned a fiddle piece but me." So, I try to keep everybody playing, having experiences in the same kind of music, so no one feels left out.

Erin: [00:27:47] But yeah, I might have to modify something or take it out depending on the students with special needs. Does that answer your question?

TR: [00:27:56] Yes. Is there anything else that you would like to add on repertoire choice?

Erin: [00:28:10] My list, which I can show you, a lot of it is based on Mimi Zweig and why am I blanking on her name? [Unclear.]

TR: [00:28:27] Dorothy DeLay? I'm just guessing.

TR: [00:28:28] Thank you. Dorothy DeLay. Oh my gosh, that's embarrassing. Yes. Dorothy DeLay, and then my last teacher, Vartan Manoogian, the way he would teach concertos in what order. So, my list is kind of a combination of those, and then I've inserted from there the etudes and exercises I've learned from all my mentors. So, that's how I prescribe my list.

TR: [00:28:59] Thanks. Would you be willing to have it included in the thesis? I would take any personal information off of it.

Erin: [00:29:11] Wait, say that again? "If I would be willing to...?"

TR: [00:29:15] ...share It and have it included in the final thesis.

Erin: [00:29:19] Oh my list. Yeah, yeah of course.

TR: [00:29:21] I'm hoping that this thesis will serve as a resource for other studio violin teachers, too.

Erin: [00:29:27] Yeah. Yeah. Uh-huh. It was actually one of our projects that [music education faculty] made us do when we were all taking our classes over at [public university in Texas], so that's where I was able to put together this list. So, yeah, I'd be more than happy to share it with you.

Bryan.2019-01-15

TR: [00:02:13] And do you consent?

Bryan: [00:02:13] Yes, I consent.

TR: [00:02:15] Thank you, okay. How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Bryan: [00:02:24] Jeez. I was thinking about that. It's actually about 45 years.

TR: [00:02:29] And did you teach when you were in high school or college?

Bryan: [00:02:33] I did when I was in college.

TR: [00:02:36] Do those 45 years count the time you spent teaching in college as well?

Bryan: [00:02:42] No.

TR: [00:02:42] How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Bryan: [00:02:48] I have about eight to 10.

TR: [00:02:53] And what is the fewest and greatest number of students you have taught at one time?

Bryan: [00:02:59] I think that roughly eight is the least. And maybe at some time, at some point, I had about 22.

TR: [00:03:12] Please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Bryan: [00:03:17] Currently, or just like over time?

TR: [00:03:24] Over time.

Bryan: [00:03:25] I have taught three or four-year-old beginners, and I have students that are in college.

TR: [00:03:39] Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

Bryan: [00:03:54] I think that my first reaction would be that my private violin teacher when I was in.... I started lessons when I was in the fifth grade with a private teacher, and I had her through high school. So, I think my very first teacher and my very first orchestra director had, the way they treated me and the way they taught me, the attitude they had, and the process. I think that's the primary influence.

TR: [00:04:34] Keep going.

Bryan: [00:04:37] So those first teachers, the way they introduced the instrument to me. The way they introduced music to me and how it became part of sort of my consciousness and what I wanted to do, I think that goes back to them.

Bryan: [00:04:56] After that, the private teachers that I've worked with throughout the years. I've had mostly very good ones. I can't think of one college teacher I had.... well, I reacted to his teaching style in a negative way, but it helped me a lot as a teacher throughout my life, because I never go where he went which was abusive. And like, you know, trying to improve by shaming me. So, I think that there's a little, a slight negative, from that guy.

Bryan: [00:05:41] But then on the other side, I am a teacher trainer for Suzuki in the Schools, and so I've taken all 10 books of the Suzuki repertoire. And I've taken Book Four about four or five times. I've taken Books Two three or four times. And I've worked in that sense as an adult.

Bryan: [00:06:07] I've probably worked with maybe 20, 25 different Suzuki teacher trainers. Then just watching how they teach. And then at those institutes, you have to do 10 hours of observation of people teaching. The Suzuki experience just gave me so much experience in watching other people teach and seeing what happened. And at first, there was what they would do when they were teaching. But then as I progressed on that, I would think, like, "I wonder if I would listen to the kid play." And then I would say, "I wonder what this teacher's going to say. What is he picking up on?" In those Suzuki observations, I think that the biggest thing I gained was watching a student play, and then forming in my mind what I thought I would address, and then see what the teacher addressed and then kind of comparing that.

Bryan: [00:07:13] Outside the Suzuki stuff, I worked several summers with the Vamoses, Almita and Roland Vamos, and I got a lot of technical experience from them: the way they teach technique. That was very good for me in the way that they are so organized. That A leads to B leads to C, a sequencing of technical development.

Bryan: [00:07:45] And then I think I'm very consciously go to concerts. I listen to recordings. I watch TV. I just keep current on the way people play. And I love watching those Menuhin competitions to see what kind of shifting, what kind of style is current in those competitions. I think that lineage would be like my first teacher, like trying to [unclear] as many teachers as I possibly can. And listen to as many recitals as I can to just keep my ears current about what kids are supposed to be able to do.

TR: [00:08:37] That's a great answer. One thing you broke up a little bit when you were talking about the teacher trainers, I think. Was it "Damos" or? they must be I am aware.

Bryan: [00:08:52] Vamos. V-A-M-O-S.

TR: [00:08:52] Okay. Thank you. What are the factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Bryan: [00:09:04] There are two things I mean. First of all, I choose stuff--repertoire for kids--they've got to be able to do it. They have to be successful. So that's one thing that I have to assess where they are and at that this piece they will have success in it. And if I can find a piece that....

Bryan: [00:09:35] Well, let me back up. When they're doing their solo repertoire, I choose stuff that I know there's going to be able to do that has a stretch but that I know they're going to be able to do it. Their etudes and their technical things, that is beyond what they are right now. So they always are chasing their technical assignments, but their repertoire is always stuff that I think that within at least a couple of months they're going to be able to have a successful performance of it.

TR: [00:10:15] And how do you evaluate whether a student can "do it," and what does success look like to you?

Bryan: [00:10:23] Well, I think nobody plays badly on purpose. If they are just really sucking at a piece, then it is just the wrong piece. I just made a bad choice. So, I would say that.

Bryan: [00:10:47] Technique they have to be.... it's a stretch, but their repertoire has to be within their grasp.

TR: [00:10:57] Do you have a teaching philosophy? And if so, describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose?

Bryan: [00:11:08] One of my teachers, actually was she was a piano teacher, but I heard her say she was a piano pedagogy teacher, and she said, "As a teacher, your job is to engineer your students' success." And to me, that's a very powerful statement. You know, you have to see the kid, and you have to be able to diagnose why.

Bryan: [00:11:39] And like I said, "No kid plays badly on purpose." You know: Why is the bow arm not working? Why is shifting not working? Why is the vibrato not working? And they're trying. So you just have to find a way to make their physicality do what their musical soul wants to do.

Bryan: [00:12:05] So I would say my teaching philosophy is engineer success.

TR: [00:12:10] And is there anything more that you would like to say about how your philosophy relates to the repertoire that you choose?

Bryan: [00:12:20] Well I think it would be they need to be challenged, but I do that through their etudes and scales. And the repertoire, of course it would challenge them. But I keep the repertoire within their comfort, not their comfort zone, but their accessible range within a couple of months.

TR: [00:12:51] To what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Bryan: [00:13:00] I would say that I don't personalize the repertoire so much as I would personalize the approach to the repertoire with each student. If I'm teaching "Czardas," the Monti "Czardas," to some kid if it's going to be a different approach from the personality of the kid.

Bryan: [00:13:21] Does that make sense? I don't think I…that my approach to the kid rather than the piece. How does this student learn this piece?

TR: [00:13:34] So, just so I'm understanding you correctly: you would take the same pieces for your student but you would change the way that you teach them?

Bryan: [00:13:43] Yes, yes, yes.

TR: [00:13:48] How do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your students' skill level?

Bryan: [00:13:54] Well, my students here, since I live in Texas, it's a very competitive state. And all my kids are in their school orchestras. And then through the school orchestras and their solo contests through the University Interscholastic League [UIL]. They have a prescribed music list. So, I have to keep that in mind. They have to enter contests, and they have to play music off of a prescribed list. It's a really comprehensive list. So, it's not quite--it's not that it's a confining thing, but I have to keep in mind that they're going to go to contests and they're going to be graded. They're going to either get a medal and their peers are going to know what ranking they got. So, I think besides the musical thing, I always keep in mind how the kid's performance level fits into their social structure.

Bryan: [00:14:55] So, they can't be in, you know, in the eighth grade wearing eye shadow and pantyhose and playing Bach "Minuet Number One." I try to keep it so that

their violin can be part of their persona whoever they are socially and where they are socially.

Bryan: [00:15:24] And then as far as the technical level, that's easy to judge. And then I also take into consideration like....

Bryan: [00:15:35] But, you know, some kids I would not assign the "Czardas" when it was just a very meek kid. I wouldn't assign them that piece until they were way past it. I try not to make them expand. I'm not pushing them to be artistically past what they are socially, that their soul is like comfortable doing. In fact, I think that I'm more aware of that. Like: "How does this kid feel playing this piece as opposed to does he really have the technique to do it?"

TR: [00:16:24] That's a really interesting response. So as a follow-up to that: How do you relate the repertoire to your students' home or school life? If you do so.

Bryan: [00:16:41] Sort of in the same way. I have a really good rapport with all my parents, so they don't try to push me. Like: "I want my kid to play Paganini." So they don't push. So, my parents leave it pretty much up to me. I do try to figure it out if when this kid is, like, warming up at orchestra, like: "What is he playing? What is his peer group listening to him play? Does he fit in socially? I answered that somewhat. I mean that their pieces are interesting to listen to.

Bryan: [00:17:30] For example, I wouldn't assign someone a really slow movement of a concerto or "Meditation" from Thais when it was a struggle for them. I would wait until they have the technique so that if they're developing that sort of that side of the personality, it would not have any technical difficulty for them at all, that they would feel comfortably technically with maybe expanding their emotional content of their playing.

TR: [00:18:02] Describe, if applicable, the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire.

Bryan: [00:18:11] Maybe just that my kids have to do that UIL stuff, that have to play solos off the list. And then here in Texas, there is the Region orchestras and All-State orchestras. The music that they assign is really difficult.

Bryan: [00:18:30] So I have to incorporate what they're doing at their school and what their requirements for their UIL orchestra contests and their solo contests. And then for my high school kids, when they assigned what the All-State kids have to prepare. I mean this year it was like the Rite of Spring and two Rode etudes, and the "Tannhauser Overture" and Mahler First.

Bryan: [00:18:58] For the high school kids, that's a huge chunk of your lesson time. Because it's important to them, and it's important to their college applications that they are successful in those competitions. So I had to put that in the mix.

TR: [00:19:15] Are you saying that you wouldn't otherwise have your students learn these pieces or you would, but just at a different time...?

Bryan: [00:19:28] I wouldn't put that kind of orchestral excerpts into my lesson plans if they weren't required to do that through their school orchestras. It influences the solo repertoire in some respects, because when the Class One list for violins in the state solo contest, that's prescribed. You have to play one of the things that they have on their list.

TR: [00:19:58] Has a repertoire that you teach changed over time? And why or why not?

Bryan: [00:20:04] I would say in those 45 years I've taught, in the last 20 or so years, I think my repertoire is pretty solid and is pretty uniform. When I think about my kids have pretty much all gone through kind of a prescribed set of solos. I think that kind of

comes from my rep, from my strength in the Suzuki world. I mean all of my kids go through the first five books of Suzuki, and then we sort of can branch out.

Bryan: [00:20:51] That said, I do have pieces that I teach and everyone plays them. And I would say that it has kind of solidified. There is a very basic core that I have them all learn. And then, if I hear a piece, if hear some other kid play a piece, then, "Oh, that'd be good for Maya." But I do have a core that I teach.

TR: [00:21:20] What makes a piece belong to the repertoire that you teach?

Bryan: [00:21:27] I would say the sequence, that it fits into a sequence. If a kid's going to have to play the Saint Saens Third by the time that they're a junior or senior in high school, then these things have to be in. That's what's there. Say, if you're going to play the Bruch Concerto. Then you've got to have thirds, and you've got to have tenths. You've got to have octaves. You've got to have really good shifts and string technique. You've got to have off-the-string bowing, so then okay: the pieces before that... like: "What are the pieces that you use to teach off-the-string bowing?" In my case, we start with like Gossec "Gavotte" and Book Four, and the Suzuki and actually using off the string bowing. The Czardas does that. The Mozart Rondo does that. So then there's those strengths or techniques. Then I had pieces that all of them play that just sort of lead them into those bigger concertos.

TR: [00:22:44] So you said that prior to 20 years ago, you did teach different repertoire?

Bryan: [00:23:00] Let's see. I think that in the last 10 years, I have maybe not. The things that I used to teach that I just got tired of musically. Like the Accolay Concerto. I just don't teach it anymore, because I just don't think it's very good music. That's the one that comes to mind. A piece that I used to teach, but I just thought, "You know, I'm not going to teach this anymore. I just don't find it interesting anymore."

TR: [00:23:35] And you already kind of answered this, but are there any other specific people, experiences, or realizations that were either significant to making this change in the repertoire that you did change or strengthen your belief that your existing repertoire was a good fit for your studio--so the pieces that you carried into your studio today?

Bryan: [00:23:59] I think it's kind of a weird answer, but I think the time constraints of students these days as opposed to 20 years ago. The kids, their schoolwork is so incredibly demanding and time consuming. I had never thought of this before, but I think that's one reason why I sort of pare down the core stuff that I teach. Because the kids, they just don't have time. The time they spend with me, I've got to get them down the road real fast. Maybe pare down the core, that my core of pieces is more concentrated because it achieves technique faster.

Bryan: [00:24:45] But I think that was predicated by their time constraints. And when I live in [large city in Texas], it takes so long for them to get to my house. This is a big city now that, and that's one of their time constraints too. How much time can they spend coming to lessons?

TR: [00:25:09] How often do you teach repertoire that you have never previously learned yourself?

Bryan: [00:25:23] Let me see. A few years ago, the All-State etude was out of the de Beriot concert etudes. And I did not know those etudes before, so that was something I learned.

Bryan: [00:25:35] As far as the repertoire. I don't, well, I haven't. I'm teaching the Second Prokofiev now, which I haven't done in a long, long time. But I, this kid, I just: "Oh he could play the second movement of that. That would be a great piece for him.".

Bryan: [00:26:03] But generally speaking, I don't teach stuff that I don't play myself. I think the reason for that is the kid doesn't have time for me to learn how to teach it.

TR: [00:26:22] I see. So, would you say that this is true, that you didn't teach repertoire that you would had never previously learned yourself throughout your whole 45 years of teaching or...?

Bryan: [00:26:36] Oh no, no.

TR: [00:26:37] Or just in general?

Bryan: [00:26:38] Yeah. Just in the last 10 or 15 years. Yeah. Because for the first part of my life, I was still taking lessons in the summer and learning new repertoire. Now, I would say for the first thirty years of my life, I was learning and teaching stuff.

TR: [00:26:59] And then, speaking for the first thirty years, why did you choose to teach this new repertoire? And from where did you get the idea to expand the repertoire that you taught?

Bryan: [00:27:10] Well, you know, when you're in college, you can learn four or five concertos maybe in the four years you're there and maybe a couple of sonatas. I had time learn new material, to hear stuff in concerts and in recitals over at [public university in Texas] so that then: "Oh that's a nice piece. You know, I'd like to play that."

TR: [00:27:37] And then, just speaking more generally, what resources do you use when selecting repertoire?

Bryan: [00:27:47] Well, I mentioned the Texas UIL prescribed music list. Like, I have to. I don't assign pieces that are not on that list. Now this is very comprehensive. But I make sure that the pieces that I'm teaching the kids, they will be able to use in their school environment.

Bryan: [00:28:08] I also, for like, music club contests, they want pieces of three different styles, and college applications want different styles. I do make sure that a kid is not just playing all Romantic music.

TR: [00:28:36] Do you teach your new repertoire that you or others might consider non-traditional and why or why not?

Bryan: [00:28:42] Well I don't, but I have got two of my former students who are fairly successful in different, non-traditional music, and they both went to the Berklee School in Boston. And their teacher said, "Oh, your kids are so good, because they're technically proficient." And he said, "All I have to do is teach them, you know, what I do.".

Bryan: [00:29:13] So, I used to think I should be able to teach fiddle or stuff like that, but I thought: "Oh, that's not really what my interest is. I'm just really interested in producing good technicians and good classical players." And then, like Matt [last name] had said, "Well your kids play so well, all I have to do is just kind of buff them up a little bit and give them a different little kind of way of playing music."

Bryan: [00:29:39] But I think my basic answer would be that I don't teach non-traditional music, because I'm not good. Since I live in [large city in Texas], I tried to play country western music and all that sort of stuff. And I just sounded phony. I thought, "If someone wants to do this music, they should go to someone else." And some of my kids do take lessons with other people, but I don't try to teach it myself because I just don't sound good doing it.

TR: [00:30:04] That makes sense.

TR: [00:30:10] Sorry, you broke up again. The reception isn't great here. Was the word you said "viola?" That you don't teach viola?

Bryan: [00:30:17] I do teach viola, yes.

TR: [00:30:20] You do teach viola, okay. Do you keep a repertoire list?

Bryan: [00:30:30] Yeah, I had read your question, and I thought, "Do I?" I don't keep a list, but I could probably work that out. Because I certainly have basic pieces that I have everyone play.

TR: [00:30:51] So are there any pieces that you always teach or never teach based on a student's skill level, age, or other factors?

Bryan: [00:31:05] Pieces that I never teach.

TR: [00:31:07] Yeah. I guess you already answered the "always teach" [question].

Bryan: [00:31:10] Yeah. I don't teach pieces I don't like. But I can't think of pieces I never teach.

TR: [00:31:23] Or any pieces that you used to teach but then stopped. You already mentioned the Accolay?

Bryan: [00:31:29] Yeah, the Accolay. I used to teach the Viotti concertos a lot. I don't do that so much anymore.

Bryan: [00:31:48] I think the pieces that I don't teach anymore is that I just had my musical judgment that I just didn't think it's very interesting. I'm not saying that they're not interesting, but they're not interesting to me.

TR: [00:32:05] Okay, so that's basically the end of the interview. Do you have anything else you want to add on repertoire choice or something that you want to say that you feel is important, but wasn't addressed in one of the questions?

Bryan: [00:32:20] Let's see. Well, I think repertoire is like picking your poison...or not. You don't want to give the kid a bitter pill. I mean bitter pill meaning a little bit of poison. The technique is like something that needs... so that if it needs an additive, you have to be careful what you'd give it. You know, it's like violin vitamins. Could that be true that repertoire is like violin supplements?

Bryan: [00:33:10] I think as young teachers who I see having a sequence. I think that may be what Suzuki's great gift to the teaching was that: here's a set of books, and you can trace how the man developed string crossing. You can teach you how do you develop that. To have a sequence of the pieces that you have. Repertoire can't be random. I guess that would be my biggest statement, that repertoire cannot be random.

TR: [00:33:45] Thanks so much.

Ashley.2019-01-15

TR: [00:02:03] And do you consent?

Ashley: [00:02:04] Yes.

TR: [00:02:07] Okay, great. How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Ashley: [00:02:14] I have been teaching in my current studio for 12 years, and then I did a little bit before that, but I'd say 12 was good.

TR: [00:02:26] Okay. Did you teach when you were in high school or college?

Ashley: [00:02:32] I taught my senior year of high school. I taught a couple of the other kids that were my orchestra. And then, in between.... I took two years between my master's and my doctorate, and I taught a few kids there. But realistically, all of that was kind of clingy, baby teaching that wasn't effective.

TR: [00:03:02] Why don't you consider that effective teaching?

Ashley: [00:03:08] I didn't know what I was doing, so I didn't necessarily know what to look for when it came to good setup. I didn't know how to get students in a linear fashion through literature or through technique. But it was good for me.

TR: [00:03:34] How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Ashley: [00:03:42] I hovered around [unclear] one time, and currently I have 70. I'd like to work back down, because 70 is way too many, and I'm a little overwhelmed. So, I'd like to make my way back down to about 45.

TR: [00:04:05] Okay, sorry, you cut out the first time. You said you hovered around, and then I didn't hear the number.

Ashley: [00:04:10] Oh, I'm sorry. Thirty-five.

TR: [00:04:13] Thirty-five, okay. What is the fewest and greatest number of students that you have at one time, like a rough estimation.

Ashley: [00:04:23] Like in my current studio?

TR: [00:04:27] Yes.

Ashley: [00:04:28] Or like ever.

TR: [00:04:31] I guess whenever you consider your "effective teaching" to start.

Ashley: [00:04:35] Oh, okay. I probably started with fewest was, let's say 10, may have been 12, but we'll say 10. And then right now I'm at 70.

TR: [00:04:54] Please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Ashley: [00:05:00] The abilities ranged from absolute beginner to a really high level high school performer, somebody who can play the main early concertos of the violin repertoire, now Bruch, and Mendelssohn, and stuff like that. That's kind of the top of my studio. And then my youngest right now is six. But I've taught a three-year-old. And then my oldest, I have a couple of adults, but most of my students, once they get to 18, I age them out. I don't really work too much with adults.

TR: [00:05:50] Is there a reason for that?

Ashley: [00:05:56] I don't think I'm very effective with adults. They have a different perspective on violin lessons than a student does usually. Some of them don't. But usually it's like they're there to kind of have a nice time and learn some stuff. But, you know, they must work, and family, and all that stuff, so, they don't get to practice as regularly as the students do. And they don't. It just takes longer.

Ashley: [00:06:31] And I know teachers in the area who are much better with adults than I am. I usually pass them on.

TR: [00:06:40] Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

Ashley: [00:06:54] I got my undergrad and my master's degree with the idea that I'd go into an orchestra somewhere and play a lot and maybe teach a couple of students, but it wouldn't be a big part of my life. And then I came into my doctorate, and I needed to make money to pay for my doctorate. So, there was a string project here. I started teaching these little kids, and I started getting.... That was the second year I was doing

that teaching. That's when I got my first Suzuki book training, and I learned how to, like, set up a student and be effective as a teacher. And it really showed me what I wanted to do with my life rather than perform in an orchestra. And so that was kind of the first highlight.

Ashley: [00:08:12] And then once I got my first book training, I wanted to do more Suzuki training. And I went to Suzuki training in Ottawa in Kansas. And the lady there who was doing the Book Two training, Susan Kempter, I just I loved how she taught, and I loved how she did all the training. So, I ended up going back every other summer after that to study with her. So, I've got Books One through Eight studied with Susan Kempter. And I really try and emulate her when I'm teaching most of the time.

Ashley: [00:08:53] And then, two years ago I went to the Juilliard Teaching Symposium, and I saw some really amazing upper, upper, upper level violin playing and some really great teachers. And I reconnected with Kurt Sassmannshaus, who was one of the professors where I got my master's degree. And I ended up seeing him teach all this technical stuff. And then I went on his website, violinmasterclass, and I started really doing a lot of research. Because he's really, really good about lining up all the techniques that you need to get everything for your kids. So, I've been really using that as like my technique guide post. And then putting the technique into the literature and all the training that I've gotten with all these other teachers. I think that's all.

TR: [00:10:00] That was a very detailed answer. Thank you. What are the factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Ashley: [00:10:13] It's really important that it's not so out of reach for them that they can't even fathom what's going on in the music or that they just give up because it's just a disaster. But I don't want the literature that I pick for them to be too easy, because then they're not going to love it. I'd like them to really like the pieces, especially when they're older, because then they'll actually practice it a lot, as opposed to just practicing

it because I'm making them. And so when I find a piece that teaches them new repertoire that they also are just dying to play, that's like the jackpot sweet spot.

TR: [00:11:09] How do you make your decision if you and the student do not agree on repertoire?

Ashley: [00:11:25] Oh, if we don't agree, I show them like the parts of the piece that I picked. Well, it depends on if they've started working on it, and they just, they realize: "Oh I really hate this." Then I show them the parts of the piece that I need them to work on so that they can progress as a student. And we just say, "Okay, I need you to do this." And then I ask them what they want. And sometimes they have an idea of a piece that they want to play, and sometimes they haven't got a clue. And so I'll play some things for them, and they'll go, "Oo that." And so then I use that as the carrot to get them through that piece that they were on that they don't love.

Ashley: [00:12:14] And then for the little kids, they don't really do that too much.

TR: [00:12:25] Do you have a teaching philosophy? And if so, describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose.

Ashley: [00:12:33] My teaching philosophy is that I want these kids to play the violin, and with the idea that they're going to play the violin until they're eighty-five, or longer if I can help it. And I want them to be the best, best, best possible violinist they can be. And hopefully they're going to go into something that is not music, so that they can... There's so many musicians out there in the world, and I want them to just use the music as a way to be, as a way to kind of blow off steam. But then if they do go into music, then we go into really hyper- drive mode, and we make sure that everything we do is super-squeaky clean, so that they're ready to go for auditions and stuff.

TR: [00:13:33] And then, if this applies, can you tell me a little bit more about how your teaching philosophy relates to the repertoire that you choose?

Ashley: [00:13:42] Oh, sorry.

TR: [00:13:42] It's okay.

Ashley: [00:13:50] I try and get within that idea that I want them to love the music, especially when they're older and they really start to get an opinion about music. I choose repertoire that hopefully they will really like. And again, if they don't love it, I tell them what they're doing and why they're doing whatever it is so that we can get to some place they really want to be. And then I have a lot of students who then bring in that pop song that they've been dying to play. And we can use that repertoire just to kind of keep them really excited about the instrument.

TR: [00:14:30] So, you'd say in that case that repertoire is for motivation too?

Ashley: [00:14:38] Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

TR: [00:14:40] To what extent do you personalized repertoire for each student?

Ashley: [00:14:49] I have a set.... I kind of go through the same set list when they're first starting. But then as they get older, I really see where the weak parts of their technique are and try and pick pieces that fill in those holes or reinforce a technique that they still need to work on. And then even when they're younger, I try and not stick just to like: "You have to do it in this order." I let them play around with things a little bit so that they feel like they're still moving through the repertoire but still working on the pieces that I need them to work on so that they get the technique they need.

TR: [00:15:38] Can you talk a little bit more about "playing around" with the repertoire with the younger students?

Ashley: [00:15:43] Yeah, sure. Like my six-year-old right now. She really has mastered "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." And so, if you're going through the Suzuki repertoire, the next thing on the list is "Lightly Row." And she's got about half of that song done, but she's very scattered. She doesn't focus really well. I mean, she's six. So, then I teach her like a little bit [unclear]. She really likes to sing about popcorn. So, we just got the first little part of "Allegro," and then I've also taught her the first little part of "Song of the Wind," because it's about piggies, and she thinks that's hilarious.

Ashley: [00:16:28] So, then we can we can still focus on cleaning up "Twinkle." That's kind of our review piece now. So, we can use that to look at the bow and do that kind of stuff. But then we can say, "Oh we're going to do the piggy song." And she can learn how to do that lift with her bow while she's doing "Allegro" and learning to extend the bow a little bit. It really seemed to work for her to work all over the place.

TR: [00:16:57] Thank you for that. How do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your students' skill level?

Ashley: [00:17:17] You just have to make sure that you have got something that isn't so out of their league that they can't deal with it. Yeah.

TR: [00:17:32] Yeah I know the question is intentionally worded to be a very open-ended, which can be difficult to answer. So, what does "out of their league" look like?

Ashley: [00:17:48] Like, if they're in Book One, and all of a sudden.... Oh gosh, it's like, I teach a few students that are at this middle school, and they're kind of end of Book Two level. And then their teacher said, "Okay, we're going to do "Bach Double." And so that was like going from a good solid Lully "Gavotte" to end of Book Four. All those accidentals, all of those runs, and they were dying. So, I tried to.... Like for them, because they had to play it because it was part of their orchestra concert, we just did the best that we could to make it work. And I personally would never assign them that kind of literature. So, that's what I mean by "out of their league."

TR: [00:18:44] Describe, if applicable, the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice.

Ashley: [00:18:54] I try to choose literature that will get them into the next place technique-wise in the least amount of steps, because I really believe that once you get to sixth grade, that kid has so many other obligations in life that their practice time goes down dramatically. And then they're also in orchestra. [unclear] thing, and they've got swimming tests, and they're in like 700 different things. So, the repertoire choices that I'm making when they're younger, I might skip a few pieces in Suzuki books or just do a chunk of it to get a specific piece of technique if we need to get through things quicker just so that by the time they're in sixth grade, they're ready to go. They have facility. Hopefully shifting into really high positions, and sight reading really well, and being able to just keep up with that level so that when they get there, it's not a big deal.

Ashley: [00:20:13] I guess that's my thought process for going forward. And then once they get into sixth grade and beyond, I really try to choose repertoire that will help them continue their process forward in the same way: with the least amount of steps. And then also give them something so that when they have their competitions for Solo and Ensemble and those kind of things, they're prepared to go and play in front of a judge or competitions that are here in town. They're prepared to go in front of a competition panel so that they can participate with the violin in that way.

TR: [00:21:02] Has a repertoire that you teach changed over time. And why or why not?

Ashley: [00:21:08] Yes.

Ashley: [00:21:14] When I first started doing my Suzuki training eleven years ago, I was a Suzuki kid, so I knew all the music, Books One through Eight. Well, Books One

through Ten. So, I was just teaching straight Suzuki One through Ten. And I'd have them do a couple of scales, but it wasn't anything really beyond that scope.

Ashley: [00:21:42] And then as I've been doing more Suzuki training and more.... Like, when I went to this the Juilliard symposium, and then I've been doing more research online, and seeing more people and how they teach and the repertoire that they choose. I started skipping a little bit of the pieces and adding things back in the repertoire so that we have more variety and more technical building early on. As well as adding new etude books.

Ashley: [00:22:22] And then I've really started to explore... Kurt Sassmannshaus. He has a whole repertoire of music that he's released through his little early violin method, and I just never, I didn't personally study any of this. I know that that's one of your questions later, but I didn't know this stuff. So, I've been adding this in. Like, a Seitz Concerto in G Minor. It's amazing. It's in the viola book, but we don't get it in the violin book.

Ashley: [00:22:58] And then what else? Oh, and then Accolay Concerto. It's an amazing concerto for building things. And de Beriot Nine.

Ashley: [00:23:08] And I'm just trying to get them, like I said, that shortest path. I don't think we have to do four Handel sonatas that are in Suzuki repertoire to get them to that next level. And I'm noticing though that I'm being a little bit too scattered and throwing out too much of the old repertoire, so I'm trying to make sure and go back and look and see if any of those pieces that I've kind of left by the wayside should be re- included.

TR: [00:23:45] How do you decide whether to include a piece that you previously taught or exclude a piece? Since time seems to be really important to you.

Ashley: [00:24:11] Well, if they like it, then I'm going to go for it. Also, if the literature seems to help either reinforce an old technique that they're not the best at or that it adds

a little bit of something new to old technique or a new technique that they'll need in the future, I'll take that out of that exclusion list.

Ashley: [00:24:43] Like the Pugnani, the "Largo" from Book, I think that's Book Six [Eight]. I haven't been teaching that, and I really need to get that thing back out, because it's got so much good stuff to teach them about tone. And I've been really... I've been worried about left hand and bow hand-- bow technique-- and not necessarily enough about tone. So, I need to really put that back in to get more tone building.

TR: [00:25:21] So, you already sort of answered this with the Juilliard symposium and Kurt Sassmannshaus, but are there any specific people, experience, or realizations that were either significant to making this change in your repertoire choice or strengthen your belief that your existing repertoire was a good fit for your studio?

Ashley: [00:25:43] Right. Yeah, I think that stuff. And also, my best friend teaches the higher-level students, so he'll take a student who's kind of around Bach A Concerto, and he'll take them up to like Sebelius Concerto. He understands that repertoire. I couldn't... That's not my forte. But it's really interesting to see.... I really like talking to him, because there's a lot of things that he talks about in the technique that he wants his students to bring with them to their studio, to their lessons when they start studying with him. So, I'm trying to figure out repertoire-wise and technique-wise: What is the best package for a student to have so that when they get to the Bruch Concerto, they can just go to any other teacher and continue forward.

TR: [00:26:55] How often do you teach repertoire that you have never previously learned yourself, and why do you choose to teach this new repertoire?

Ashley: [00:27:03] I think it's probably like 20 percent of the time. I studied all the Suzuki, like all of it. Every single piece in Books One through Eight. And then we didn't do Nine and Ten. But I eventually filled that in with Mozart Four and Five with other teachers. So, I've done a lot of repertoire on my own, but I didn't do anything

outside of the Suzuki One through those Eight Books. I had no idea that Monti "Czardas" was a thing that teachers use on a regular basis. So, I incorporated that, and, like, the Accolay Concerto, I had no idea about it. The Seitz Concerto. So, all of those little middle pieces that I just never got to. That's kind of where I'm at, the stuff that gets you from end of Book Five-ish to Bruch Concerto or Viotti Concerto.

TR: [00:28:15] What resources do you use or access to find this new repertoire or to find repertoire more generally?

Ashley: [00:28:28] I went to a Suzuki... What do they call those courses that they have that are not a book training class, a resource class? I can't remember what they call it, but I went to one that was hosted up in Dallas where they were just talking about outside literature and other things that you could use. So, I used that. Teri Einfeldt was the teacher of that class, and that was super helpful to get me started with this idea of outside-of-the-books repertoire. And then just talking to people and seeing what other teachers around me in the neighborhood are teaching. The Monti "Czardas" is a huge piece.

Ashley: [00:29:15] And then when I was getting my doctorate at [public university in Texas,] [music education professor at same university] pulled up a lot of other pieces. She had a repertoire class, and so I bought all the Barbara Barber books. I could go through that repertoire in the class. And I actually ended up in the class doing all of the viola repertoire, because I also wanted to start getting into that rep and seeing what it was about the viola that was actually really cool that I didn't realize before.

TR: [00:29:53] Do you teach viola as well as violin then?

Ashley: [00:29:56] Yes.

TR: [00:29:57] Okay. So, about what proportion of your studio is viola students? Unless you have 70 violin students and then additional violists?

Ashley: [00:30:09] Oh my God.

TR: [00:30:12] I don't know if you could be human and do that.

Ashley: [00:30:16] Oh my God, I'd jump off a cliff. Well, I think I think 10 percent. I guess, seven of them. Yeah, that makes sense.

[00:30:25] And my violists-- I don't usually... I can't convince anybody to start. No, that's a lie. I can convince somebody to start on viola. I have a couple of beginner violists, and in the middle school. I teach... In Texas, you can teach in the schools during the school day, so I can pull them out of their beginner viola class and teach them. I have two beginner violists, and then my highest level violist is working on the end of Book Five. And we're going to get him into a CPE Bach Concerto soon. That's where I'm really.... That's the big literature that I don't necessarily know a lot of, is all that viola literature. So, I'm trying to figure out where the line is, where I should stop and really send them to a violist that studied that in school with an actual viola professor, so I don't screw them up too much.

TR: [00:31:27] And then just another sort of demographic-type question. It sounded like you stick pretty closely to Suzuki as your core repertoire. Is that correct?

Ashley: [00:31:43] I think so.

TR: [00:31:44] Okay. Roughly what percentage of the musical material that you use, the written musical material--- is Suzuki and non-Suzuki.

Ashley: [00:31:57] And are you talking like straight, super literature, or are you talking about etudes as well?

TR: [00:32:05] You can describe it however you want to.

Ashley: [00:32:08] Okay, all right. If I'm just talking.... Obviously, Suzuki didn't. Well, that's a lie. He did do etudes. He wrote that Quint etude book and did a couple of etude books. I don't really use a lot of Suzuki etude stuff, so that's all outside that repertoire. But if it's just songs or pieces, then it's probably like 60 percent Suzuki and then 40 percent outside of the Suzuki realm. And then when they're really little, it's all Suzuki. And as they get older, we start exploring.

TR: [00:32:54] Thank you. Do you teach any repertoire that you or others might consider non-traditional? And why or why not?

Ashley: [00:33:04] At this point, I don't really teach stuff that's not super non-traditional. I think mostly it's because my place where I feel like I fit within the teaching community is that beginner to like "getting pretty good but not clean, not ready to go." And so, I feel like I'm just trying to teach them all the basic stuff that they need to be really successful. And then they can go to the next teacher, and they can get crazy and pull out all the Szymanowskis that they want.

TR: [00:33:49] Are there any pieces that you always teach or never teach based on a student's skill level, age, or other factor?

Ashley: [00:34:00] I mean I always teach "Twinkle." I don't care how old you are, but I mean there's an....There's other... Like, Book One: Basically, I'm going to teach it to you. There's one student I experimented with who I didn't teach Book One to. She was a pianist, so she could already read music. So, I taught her the Barbara Barber Book One. And I find that now that she's older, oh she's in Book Five-ish, Six-ish, and there's just some stuff that she's not really good at that I just didn't get to give her with that basic technique from Book One. So, basically if you're in my studio, I don't care who you are. You're going to study Book One Suzuki, because it's got all the major technique. And then after that, I'm a lot more open-ended, and really Book Two as well. Those two books are so important.

TR: [00:35:09] And then "never teach?" So this could either be something that you skip entirely or you used to teach but you don't teach anymore. And then why?

Ashley: [00:35:21] Well, I hate "never." Because there's always somebody who wants to study something with you. I don't really teach the Vivaldi G Concerto. I've kind of modified the way that I teach the Vivaldi A Concerto. I mean it's not as hard as the G Concerto for sure, but they're kind of getting some of the technical aspects of what they would get out of that concerto earlier. And then because I'm exploring Seitz Concerto, like this other literature, when I get to Vivaldi G, it just seems kind of like a waste.

Ashley: [00:36:04] But I always offer the student the opportunity. If they're dying to play a movement, we'll do it.

TR: [00:36:13] Do you keep a repertoire list?

Ashley: [00:36:16] I kind of do, in my head. And I would like to write it down. So, I think this would be the perfect opportunity for me to write it out. You know, I got to take an overview class with Preucil, Doris Preucil. And she has that whole repertoire list with her etudes and which scales. And I just keep it in the back of my head, because that's kind of what I want, so that everybody in my studio has that and they know where they're going. And I think that's my next step within my own studio, is to get that to them-- to my students--so they know where they're going. So yes, there will be one. So, if I can write that out and give that to you, that would be good for me and you.

TR: [00:37:15] Thanks. So that's basically the end of the interview. Is there anything else that you wanted to say about repertoire? In general or something that you feel is important to say that you haven't mentioned or that the questions didn't address?

Ashley: [00:37:34] I think.... Repertoire is so hard. It's just so difficult to pick, because you think you're getting something for a student, and it's like, kind of there but it's not what you expected.

Ashley: [00:37:56] Or you think you know what repertoire is that you want to pull out for them, because you think that they need this technique, but then they don't need it at all. They got it like instantly, and so you're stuck learning some piece. Yeah, repertoire is like the hardest. Oh my God.

TR: [00:38:13] Yeah. And there's so much for violin out there. Thank you very much.

Raul.2019-01-16

TR: [00:02:03] Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Raul: [00:02:14] No, I do not.

TR: [00:02:17] And do you consent?

Raul: [00:02:19] I do.

TR: [00:02:25] How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Raul: [00:02:27] About 12 to 13 years.

TR: [00:02:33] Did you teach when you were in high school or college?

Raul: [00:02:34] College, yes. Not in high school.

TR: [00:02:38] So, does the 12 years count when you were in college?

Raul: [00:02:42] Yes. Well it was pretty much senior year of college and then my master's degree and on.

TR: [00:02:53] How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Raul: [00:02:58] Right now I have 34. It has varied between four, at the lowest when I was a grad student, and 36, since I have graduated. Usually between 24 and 30.

TR: [00:03:17] And please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Raul: [00:03:23] Ages four through 50 and ability from pre-Twinkler to past the Suzuki repertoire.

TR: [00:03:30] What does "past the Suzuki repertoire" look like?

Raul: [00:03:38] Right now, I have students playing Beethoven Romance in F Major, Viotti Concerto Number 23, getting ready for Mozart Concerto Number Four and Kreisler "Praeludium and Allegro." And I should just mention that the Mozart Concerto is technically in the Suzuki books, in Suzuki Book Ten.

TR: [00:04:11] Yeah, most teachers don't really consider it Suzuki repertoire, it seems like. Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

Raul: [00:04:32] It has deeply influenced--I actually was afraid of teaching and avoided teaching during my senior year of college when I had to first teach. I thought I was not a good teacher. I didn't know what I was doing, and so I avoided it.

Raul: [00:04:55] When I started grad school, one of the courses I took was string pedagogy with emphasis in Suzuki training, with Suzuki long-term training with [renowned Suzuki teacher trainer] at [public university in the Southwest]. And there is where I actually learned that there is a method to teaching. So, her influence was great, and she also presented me with the Suzuki method. And the idea of breaking things down to simplify the task in order to build on top of it, it was just life-changing to me both in my performance and on my teaching.

Raul: [00:05:37] And I don't say life-changing lightly, because it did change my career goals. My ideal was to do grad school and go for auditions, then be a performer. And that has shifted widely. I finished my master's. I finished my doctorate. And I have since concentrated in teaching and research involving teaching. So, these grad courses and teachers have greatly influenced my teaching.

Raul: [00:06:11] Besides Suzuki training, I have been also influenced by another great violin teacher I came in contact, that's [applied faculty member] at [public university in the Northwest]. His demeanor with students and his methodical way of using Ševčík, mostly Opus Eight for shifting and Opus Nine for double stops. And what most people would call student repertoire even though he uses it at the collegiate level to work on basic technique was just eye-opening to me. And I enjoyed working with him on that repertoire to get to know the violin repertoire a little better outside of the Suzuki repertoire, as I am a violist, primarily.

Raul: [00:06:56] And of course, working with my primary teachers and viola both in college and grad school. I learned a great deal of what to do and what not to do. You always learn, like it's, "Oh, I didn't like the way this was approached. I will not do this with my students, or I hope not to do this with my students." Or things like, "Oh this exercise is great. Oh, this way of approaching this specific technique, whatever that is, works really well for me. I'll pass it along." Even teachers with whom I did not have any lessons have influenced me greatly. A former violin professor at [same university in the Northwest], just talking with her and getting some handouts that she gave to her

students was a great deal too of learning. I still use with my own students some of her handouts about vibrato exercises, for example.

TR: [00:08:14] What resources do you use when selecting repertoire?

Raul: [00:08:22] Most of my students, I start them with the Suzuki method. So, right there you have a choice of repertoire. And that's based on the sequential approach and the technique approach. Right, you have a sequence of techniques that are introduced step-by-step through the repertoire. And that works great up to Book Four, maybe a little bit of Book Five. Of course, there are things that are introduced and refined after that but not as much.

Raul: [00:08:52] I like to use etudes to both practice reading and reinforce techniques. And one thing that I like to use repertoire selection for is to supplement what I find missing on the Suzuki method. Many pieces from other eras. The Suzuki method is very heavy on Baroque repertoire. So, for Classical repertoire, Romantic, or even more Modern or contemporary, you know, you look for supplemental repertoire for that. Or using etudes to select repertoire that will help with this specific technique.

Raul: [00:09:37] My doctoral document was about etudes originally written for viola that could help Suzuki viola students. In fact, I separated a bunch of etudes by teaching points: So, etudes that work on detache, on spiccato, or up-bow spiccato, or thirds, sixths, things like that. And separating them in those [unclear]. And so, it could be a help to teachers looking for a specific technique to work on with their students.

Raul: [00:10:14] Most recently, I presented at a conference, and my topic was "supplemental repertoire for the violist." My concentration was on Book Three and up, like Book Two of the Suzuki viola method and up. Things that I was looking at while deciding for what level a given piece would be is: What's the highest position that he uses? Or what are the technical and musical features? For example, one given piece had staccato versus legato, had notes on all four strings, and used finger patterns with

second and third fingers in closed position, and then... had accents. And then I placed that in late Book One, early Book Two, because that's where you have accents. You have still that same thing they're battling in the Suzuki repertoire.

Raul: [00:11:24] Another piece, my collection was: key of G minor, has an augmented second between first and second finger, 2/2 time signature, something that many students won't have seen yet at that point. So, I put it at late Book Two or early Book Three. Extensive pizzicato passages. That's something new. You would like to introduce more pizzicato before they maybe get into an orchestra situation where they have to play extensive pizzicato. Natural harmonics. So those are considerations that I take. You know, what are the technical challenges of the piece? Do I want to introduce those technical challenges to these students? Can I use this piece to introduce a technique or to work on a technique that somehow they haven't yet conquered?

Raul: [00:12:13] Another thing is motivation. Sometimes you just need to side-step from their current repertoire, and you'll give them something new to work on. That is not necessarily harder of what they are working on currently, but it gives them a release from that piece. I find that usually around Book Four, when they're working on the Vivaldi concerti, that can work really well. In Book Five, too, when they're treading water through the Vivaldi G Minor Concerto in violin, for example. But it can really be done at any point of the repertoire, even as early as Book Three, I believe.

TR: [00:12:57] Ummhmm. To what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Raul: [00:13:00] That depends on the student. Where I'm teaching currently, I have students coming from two to four different school districts, and each school district has a different requirement for the students participating in orchestra. So, here they have to audition for regional orchestra. If they get accepted for the regional orchestra, they can audition for All-State. This is at high school level.

Raul: [00:13:33] At the middle school level, some districts do have the regional orchestras, some don't. So, sometimes I look at the state's Music Teachers Association list and see okay: there's a student that is getting ready for this audition and that audition. What are the requirements for that audition? And then look, and you kind of don't have much choice. If the student wants to audition for regionals and high school All-State, you have to use their audition piece. Sometimes it's not much a question of what choice but what you need to do for that goal.

Raul: [00:14:07] If I'm not bound by that.... There is a two-pronged approach. One approach would be to.... If it's for a recital, or for a competition, or for an audition, I will choose a repertoire that plays on the strengths of that student. So, if it's a student that has a very tight vibrato, for example, I will avoid a piece that is slow and requires less vibrato for a situation where we are trying to prepare them for an audition situation. On the other hand, if I'm just giving that piece to work on the student's technique, then I will go for that smaller piece to make them work on that technique, to really show them why we need to have a variety of vibrato speeds and widths, for example. Why it's important to control it. So, it's always trying to keep a balance of what are the needs of the student and what is the reason for giving that piece.

TR: [00:15:33] What do you and the student do when you do not agree on repertoire?

Raul: [00:15:40] I have not found a situation in which the student tells me that they don't want to play that repertoire. I have had students tell me they don't like the piece, but it has been a case where that's the audition piece required for the All-State, and then I just tell them, "Sorry, it's either that, or you don't do the All-State audition." And they have to learn it.

Raul: [00:16:09] It has happened that a student at first likes the piece, and then after a while working on it, they get tired of it and don’t want to play it anymore. That usually happens after they have worked on it, and they're kind of done. And it's a good time to put it away and revisit it later.

Raul: [00:16:27] I'm lucky enough that my local school district, uh, my local State Music Teachers Association, publishes the repertoire for All-State and Regionals four years in advance. So, I can take a look. Because it rotates every year, but they show the rotation for the next four years. So, I can take a look on who is in my studio right now, that is either in high school or will be in high school for the next four years, and start planning their development towards that as well.

Raul: [00:17:02] I had one student working on the Beethoven Romance in F Major, and that's the All-State audition piece for this year, and we started working on that over the summer. She's an exceptional student. She learned the whole piece in two weeks, in three she had it memorized. In a month, it was almost performance-ready. So, by now.... The audition for All-State is mid-February. By now, she's totally tired of the piece. So, for the whole November-December, we didn't touch the piece. And we are getting back to it this week now. And she still has that kind of teenage attitude of "I don't like this. I'm tired of this," but she got a break from it.

Raul: [00:17:46] So, if you can plan in advance, if it's a situation of audition, you know, you can plan in advance: they learn it, they put it away, and then you bring it back closer to the audition date. That can fight a little bit of the fatigue of the piece.

Raul: [00:18:00] But besides that, I have never had a student tell me they don't like a chosen piece. What I have done in the past is chosen three, four pieces that I think can work for a student. Send them the recordings of it, and say, "Let me know the one you like the most." And then we go with that. But it's always... I don't give them full choice. I limit their choice to two, three, four pieces that I know it's within their technique capabilities, and I know it's going to work for what I want from them. And then they feel like they have participated on the process, and it's less likely they will tell me they don't like it.

TR: [00:18:47] Describe, if applicable, the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice.

Raul: [00:18:54] Well, as I've mentioned before, with the older students that are wanting to participate in regional and state orchestras, we have to keep to the repertoire list that's chosen by the state music teachers association. Whether I agree that there's a purpose to the student to play their repertoire or not is almost secondary.

Raul: [00:19:16] Although, I have had students that I thought the audition piece was way above their technical capabilities and just said, "Sorry, you cannot audition this year. I don't think you're ready to play this piece." I'm not sure.... I have had to do this with more than one student. One of them was okay with it. Another one was not so okay with it. But I'm happy they respected my opinion and didn't try to push it. But I'm also aware that that could be the case in which my student would want to leave my studio for that, as I live in an area that's saturated with high-quality teachers, and many teachers that would just do what the student wants or to give them their studios. So, prescribed repertoire by auditions, this is one constraint or pressure.

Raul: [00:20:19] Another constraint would be availability. Although, with IMSLP these days, it's so much easier to find music that you wouldn't otherwise. That I almost don't want to say availability is a constraint. Let me think. Another constraint could be.... I don't know if there is any more. It's mostly prescribed repertoire by auditions or other committees and availability, really. There is sometimes maybe a recital approaching, and if a student that's on a plateau and not maybe moving or making much progress with a given piece or exercises, you might want to choose something easier. That's easier to work on so they can present something at the recital.

Raul: [00:21:25] Or another constraint which I have had to do in the past is choosing a piece outside of the Suzuki repertoire. And a more obscure piece. Not very well known by many other teachers. To help a student make into a youth symphony group, to a group that would be more appropriate for her age. If you look at Barbara Barber's series

of repertoire, she has what she believes is the equivalent of the Suzuki repertoire. This is what you [unclear] on the book. So, if you have a youth symphony audition that says to enter into this group, you must play at Suzuki Book Four level, and you have a student that's an older beginner that is about to finish Book Three but not quite in Book Four yet, and she wants to audition for that group, if you send her playing a late Book Three piece, she may or may not be placed in that group that will be more age appropriate to her and that she does have the technique to be in that group. If you send her with a piece from the Barbara Barber series, a teacher or someone in the community might know that piece and think, "Oh, this is a Book Three level piece." Even though it shows more shifting or something like that, and not place her on the group you're hoping for. But if you choose a piece of repertoire that shows shifting, shows a good bow control and all that, but it's somewhat unknown--I have done this, and the student was placed in the group you're hoping for, and she was totally fine in the group.

Raul: [00:23:22] But I fear that had I sent her playing her actual Suzuki repertoire at the time, she would be placed a group behind than what she did. So, what I did in that case was find.... You know, there's so many collections available on there, you find one that's not always played, you tinker with fingerings here and there to create more shifting opportunities. So, this student can show that they are able to do the technique that a conductor is looking for. And then you can use that. So, that's some sort of where the pressure side [unclear]. You know, you want your pressure to put a student to be successful in an audition for a group that their Suzuki repertoire would be a hindrance to them in that sense, so you would go around with the repertoire that you can adapt.

TR: [00:24:20] How often do you teach repertoire that you have never previously learned yourself? And why do you choose to teach this new repertoire, and from where do you get the idea to expand the repertoire that you teach?

Raul: [00:24:36] It happens quite often that I teach repertoire and I have not learned myself as a student. As I said, I'm primarily a viola player, and I started playing the

violin in grad school, really when I got interested in teaching the violin. So, I do not have in my background all those student violin pieces that many violinists do.

Raul: [00:25:07] I do make a point of practicing the pieces I'm about to teach. Perhaps not to performance level, but I do think it's important to have an understanding of the techniques involved and how to demonstrate the harder spots and how to practice those harder spots, so the student can see that rather than just learning by themselves you know.

Raul: [00:25:40] But I don't find that much of a hindrance. If you can work with the basics, that's fine. If you have a good understanding of the techniques of the piece, and if it's a piece that you have access to recordings, you can listen to it and get a good sense of what the piece is about, and also do score study, and also [unclear]. Score study is very important to me.

Raul: [00:26:08] And also with the viola, it's very common that you find yourself teaching new repertoire that was just composed. Last year, I commissioned a piece that was for a viola group that I was working on a summer festival, and we had to.... It's true that the students learned a piece before coming to the festival, but I had to.... It was a piece that was new for everybody: myself and the students. It had been just composed.

Raul: [00:26:46] So, I would say at least twice a year, maybe three times a year, I get at least one piece that I have not taught before. And I think this is part of being a teacher. In my opinion, the teacher is a life-long learner. If I wouldn't learn new repertoire, I think teaching would get stale very quickly. So, while I do enjoy working with the same repertoire that I know really well, I think it's important to always add something new, both for the benefit of students and for your own benefit.

Raul: [00:27:24] Now how I get the idea to expand the repertoire: Again, sometimes it's prescribed by whatever the piece your student needs to learn for a given situation. Sometimes by talking to other teachers. They're like, "Oh, what are you teaching these

days? Do you know a good piece to work on sautille?" Or: "I have this student that needs work on double stops. Do you have any pieces that you like that you work on double stops?" And you get ideas. Sometimes you get always the same answer; sometimes you get one that's a little bit often.

Raul: [00:28:00] I consider myself somewhat of a repertoire nerd, and I go looking for it. I have another really good friend from my master's degree time, and we are still in touch. He's also a repertoire nerd, and we often just send emails or sometimes even snail mail. We'll mail scores to each other. "Look at this piece I found!" Or things like that.

Raul: [00:28:30] I also have put together a big list with about 160 pieces that vary from level of difficulty of Suzuki Book Two to past Book Eight, past the Suzuki repertoire. It was put together by collecting repertoire lists from different teachers, all the teacher trainers I have worked with: Suzuki teacher trainers, plus Mimi Zweig, plus Sassmannshaus and all that. Going through that, and I put that on the spreadsheet so that I have that reference for myself. And one thing that's interesting, you know, you get those repertoire lists from different teachers. Some teachers put a given piece in Book Six, and another teacher who put that in Book Seven, another teacher put that in Book Eight. And you go like, "Wait, why is that?" And you play through the piece, and you can see, "Oh, okay. Like, yes, I see this here. I see that in there."

Raul: [00:29:27] And it just goes to show that it's very much student dependent. It really depends on what the students are working on, what their technical facility is, and you know all that.

TR: [00:29:42] So, just more generally speaking, do you have a teaching philosophy, and if so, describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose.

Raul: [00:29:49] Well, my teaching philosophy is very much aligned with the Suzuki philosophy: the idea that "Every child can." I really, truly believe in that. And the idea of teaching to the child. And I think that's the part that relates to repertoire choice: is

teaching to the child. You know, adapting your teaching style to suit the needs of each student is one thing that we do as Suzuki teachers. And as that student grows, I think adapting your teaching repertoire to suit the needs of that student is what we do.

Raul: [00:30:25] And it really bugs me: the idea of student repertoire, to be really honest with you. I think there is good repertoire, and it must be played. There is one set of pieces in the Suzuki viola Book Five by Marais, "Five Old French Dances." Four of them are in the Suzuki Book Five. And the one that's omitted is quite hard for that level. You'll see this score: It's a lot of Sul G playing and Sul C playing because of drones. So, you can understand why it's left out of the Suzuki Book Five. But that was a piece of repertoire for viola way before the Preucils had the idea of making the viola Suzuki school. And there are recordings of great artists playing those pieces. And I remember talking to a teacher once and mentioning one famous soloist had recorded those pieces, and the reaction of the other teacher was: "Why is that soloist performing such student repertoire in a recording?" And that really bugged me. Because then you can think on the violin realm, for example, "Meditation" from Thais. You have beautiful recordings of Perlman or David Nadien or Kreisler, Heifetz. You know, and you were going to say to them that that's the student repertoire. Or the Bartok [Romanian] Folk Dances, you know? So, it bugs me that idea of calling stuff because the students play it, call it student repertoire.

Raul: [00:32:06] I would rather say "cornerstones of the repertoire." That you learn as a student and you keep working on them. Because they're great pieces of music. They do serve a function in a student life where you learn them or the students work on their technique or expression. But those are pieces that as a violinist you can play for the rest of your life. What many of those can be said, also for Kreisler pieces. But it does take a great deal of musicianship to make those pieces sound like good music, good repertoire. They are very easy to sound bad, which is what happens when we give them to students in the first place, and then hopefully we help them make it sound like the little gems that they are.

TR: [00:33:03] Has the repertoire that you teach changed over time, and why or why not?

Raul: [00:33:09] I feel like it's still changing. If you look on how many years I have been teaching, it has been a while but not as much as many other more established teachers. So, I feel sometimes when it comes to finding my way to repertoire-- what pieces I like for what purposes or not. So, it's kind of a work in progress for me still, in that sense. It's finding out what you like to teach and what works for your students. And I'm sure in a few years: "Okay, I really like working with these pieces, because they develop 'this, this' and that' with my students and they seem to be pieces that the students like to play. So, I'll keep teaching these. Oh, these other pieces, I like them, but the students do not enjoy them as much. Maybe I'll try to find something similar level-wise but that's more engaging to the students." Because really, that's important-- having them enjoying what they're playing will motivate them to practice more, hopefully.

TR: [00:34:24] Do you teach any repertoire that you or others might consider non-traditional, and why or why not?

Raul: [00:34:32] Could you define non-traditional? Slightly or its broader sense?

TR: [00:34:40] Broader sense.

Raul: [00:34:43] Broader sense, okay. I do tend to use pieces that are not part of the canon repertoire in the US. I have lived in other countries, and I have gathered repertoire that I know is taught and played somewhat commonly in those countries, but they have not made it to the canon of repertoire in the U.S. or the canon of teaching repertoire in the U.S. So, in that sense, you could call them non-traditional, but they are not by no means non-traditional in the sense of no traditional notation in the music or anything like that. I haven't had a student ready for that yet.

Raul: [00:35:35] And in style, there are pieces from 20th century and 21st century that are not crazy atonal or aleatory or things like that but does have a little bit of a richer harmonic structure that you don't get in the more typical repertoire that you would find, for example, in Barbara Barber. But it does open up the student's awareness to those styles too.

Raul: [00:36:12] A great little piece that I have not taught that one yet, but it's on my file of "soon to be taught" is Persichetti's "Masques." A lot of good little things in that piece. It's a collection of ten short pieces, really. A lot of work with pizzicato and some not so pretty harmonies, so to say, inconsonant [dissonant] harmonies. So, that that would expand the harmonic understanding of the student that I'm thinking about giving that piece. But technique-wise, that's a piece that's accessible to a Book Six level violin student. It is more part of the canon of teaching pieces here in the US.

Raul: [00:37:02] But I don't use folk tunes or fiddle tunes or much of that. I have used some fiddle tunes already, like Book One, Book Two level for motivation and sometimes for technique, but I haven't done that in a while.

TR: [00:37:19] I'm sorry, I didn't quite hear you. What was the name of that piece or collection?

Raul: [00:37:25] It's by Persichetti, Vincent Persichetti, and the name of the piece is "Masques.".

Raul: [00:37:34] If you go to the Suzuki Association of the Americas website, they have there a list of supplemental repertoire, suggestions for Suzuki repertoire for Book Six and above. And those pieces are in there. Another great resource you can find in the European Suzuki Association, they also have a list of suggested repertoire. And I like how the European Suzuki Association organized their lists. They organize on pieces for tone, show pieces, Kreisler, concerti. Those are the categories that they have. So, it's interesting how they organized it.

Raul: [00:38:15] And if you compare those two lists, you're going to see what I was telling you about different teachers putting the same piece in different parts. Right. There are pieces that the European Suzuki Association has placed in Book Six, and the Suzuki Association of the Americas has put in Book Seven or vice versa or something like that. So, you see a little bit of that discrepancy, and then it's when your judgment as the teacher has to kick in and say, "Okay, what does that student need? Can my student handle this?"

TR: [00:38:45] Okay. So, we're almost to the end of the interview. Are there any other factors that are important to you when choosing repertoire or with an individual that you didn't touch on?

Raul: [00:39:02] I think my biggest considerations are the technique involved. Handle of the technique or if there is a technique that I want them to work on, and that the repertoire will force them to work on that.

Raul: [00:39:17] Enjoyment is a second one, for both of us. If there is a piece that I don't like, I'm less likely to give it to them. Although, there is a piece that's by no means my favorite, but it's a great repertoire piece for technique development. And I give that piece to all my students. It's the Accolay Violin Concerto. It does have a ton of technique in there, so I plug my nose and I give it to them, because it's important that they play that.

Raul: [00:39:54] No, I think that the biggest thing is: Is the technique accessible or something I want them to develop? And: Will this help them develop their musicality? Those are the two big considerations.

TR: [00:40:09] And then just another demographic-type question. Roughly what percentage of your studio is violinists versus violists?

Raul: [00:40:19] I am in an odd situation right now that I have way less violists than violinists. I feel like it's just the demographics of the area where I live. So, the people see the violin and they want to play more the violin. And I do feel qualified to teach violin up to a good level, so I do. I have maybe of all three to five viola students out of 34 students total.

TR: [00:41:05] Okay, is there anything else you want to add about repertoire that wasn't addressed in the questions?

Raul: [00:41:16] I don't think so, except that I would like, if possible, I'd be curious to see in the future a collection of student-level repertoire that was composed in the late 20th and early 21st century. That'd be something I haven't researched much, and I haven't seen much. So, that will be an interesting thing to see as the years pass, how this has been developed.

TR: [00:41:48] And then would you be willing to share your repertoire list with me and have it included in the thesis?

Raul: [00:41:57] I would be happy to share that, as long as credit is given to the people from whom I got that list. Because as I said, my repertoire list is a compilation of lists by at least four, maybe five different teachers.

TR: [00:42:20] Okay, yeah. Of course I would give credit.

Raul: [00:42:22] Yeah, so as long as credit is given to those teachers, I am happy to share that.

TR: [00:42:33] So, thank you very much. We're at the end of the interview.

Raul: [00:42:37] Thank you.

TR: [00:01:15] Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Diane: [00:01:27] No, I think we're good to go.

TR: [00:01:27] And do you consent?

Diane: [00:01:31] Yes.

TR: [00:01:32] Okay. How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Diane: [00:01:39] For about 30.

TR: [00:01:41] And did you teach when you were in high school or college?

Diane: [00:01:45] I taught ballet when I was in high school. I did not teach violin, but it certainly influenced it. I did teach in college, but I mostly taught viola. But I've been teaching violin pretty much all along the way as well.

TR: [00:02:02] So, does the...sorry, what was it? Thirty years? Or 25 years? Does that count when you were in college as well?

Diane: [00:02:11] No.

TR: [00:02:12] Okay, and how has ballet influenced your teaching?

Diane: [00:02:17] Well, with dance it's so.... First of all, I was very competitive in dance. I was in a company when I was 15, in a ballet company. In some cases, six hours a day, six days a week, at certain times of my life. But I was playing violin the whole time. And how it influenced me so much is that it involves your whole body. You're

also listening to music in a way that you need to incorporate it physically. You're counting in ways that I feel most instrumentalists have no idea how to count. I'm learning that more and more: that it's so important to incorporate the whole body in rhythm, and in phrasing. And that's another thing: where you learn to phrase in ways as a dancer that we really don't necessarily get to do as a violinist. And vice versa. You know, you're playing music, you have a different way of listening and feeling the music than maybe a dancer does as well. But the dance influenced me immensely: choreographing, thinking physically of how we approach the instrument. I find that that's fairly unique unless you were a dancer or a skater. Even athletes don't quite have the same feeling as a dancer, because--and I was athletic as well but---because in athletics you're not listening to music the way you are in dance, if that makes sense.

TR: [00:03:51] Yeah. That's a great answer. Thanks for expanding on that.

Diane: [00:03:57] Just to say one more thing about that: When I'm watching performers and when I'm teaching, I'm so visually oriented also because of the dance. And so, in dance, we have movements that are standard. Just like in violin. You know, you have up bows, down bows. You have eighth notes, 16th notes. And dance, you have first position, second position. You have passe, [unclear]. All these different pirouettes, and things like that. When we dance to Bach or Vivaldi or to Stravinsky or to Faure, we're going to use similar movements with different inflections, just like we're going to do that with eighth notes and 16th notes and down bows and up bows with something from Mozart to Shostakovich.

Diane: [00:04:48] The thing that I find is, as the visual part, is that so often performers--violinists, cellists, string quartets, orchestras, whatever--will often use same gestures. They'll gesture the same for Mozart as they will for Shostakovich. And so that's one of the things I really like to train and work with my students, is that the gesture, how they are going to cue or breathe or move is going to be different for Mozart or for Beethoven or for even Haydn. There's going to be nuances with even the Classical period, let alone

Brahms or getting into the more contemporary periods. That's where dance really makes a big influence to me.

TR: [00:05:32] How many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Diane: [00:05:40] I have right now about 18 students who are in the prep world, pre-college. And then I have anywhere from five to 10 students in the college division. I'm adjunct. It's a bachelor of arts program that I teach at and not a bachelor of music.

TR: [00:06:03] And what is the fewest and greatest number of students you have taught at one time?

Diane: [00:06:08] The fewest total? If you go back in college, I just had a couple. But, since I've been out of college, the fewest has probably been about 12, I think. But I've always taught chamber music along with it.

TR: [00:06:25] And the greatest number?

Diane: [00:06:28] The greatest number? That's when I was in graduate school and three kids [unclear]. I would say it was about, I'm not really sure, but I'm sure it had to be at least 30.

TR: [00:06:43] Please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Diane: [00:06:47] The youngest I've taught is three. The oldest is an adult in her 70s. The majority of my students range from 10 to 22.

TR: [00:07:02] Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal and professional experiences.

Diane: [00:07:16] Okay. As most musicians, I've got an eclectic background in musical activities. So, my influences start all the way down from as a child, being brought to watch the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York City Ballet, chamber recitals. And also in my home, my dad played piano, my mom sang, friends came over. We either played chamber music, or sang with the piano, or did show tunes or something like that, or played the card game Bridge. That was basically what went on in my house. My father's a professional Bridge player now too, so it's, uh, funny how that works.

Diane: [00:07:55] But from there, my sister was a huge influence. She played cello, and she was majoring in music. I was actually going to be a dance major, and I saw how much fun musicians were having. And as I got… the idea to play the viola, and the violin, and major in music. And that's what I did. So, probably not the right reasons to major in music, but, it was good times.

Diane: [00:08:23] And then my other influence with that was Lamar and Ruth Alsop. Ruth and Lamar. Lamar was the concertmaster of the New York City Ballet Orchestra. Ruth is the cellist in it, and their daughter's Marin Alsop, who is the conductor for the Baltimore Symphony, a very famous woman composer, err, conductor at this point. I think she's really made a huge statement in the career for women in particular. But her parents-- my sister studied with her mom-- her parents were very welcoming. Would tell us to come backstage, were always asking about where we were. My violin was made by Lamar's brother, Marin's uncle. And I have a viola also made by him that I played on for many years. But their welcoming attitude, their feeling like anyone can be part of this world and should be part of this world, made a major influence on my decision to be in this field as well as how I incorporate my students into it.

Diane: [00:09:26] My next-door neighbor gave me my first viola. It's just so many life things. They affect us so many ways. And then from there, certainly my teachers. I studied with members of the [orchestra in the Midwest] and the [string quartet in residence in the same city]--we were friends in grad school, and their influence was

huge on my playing and how I teach. As well as the Cleveland Quartet and [name], who was one of my teachers in undergrad along with [name] who is the [same orchestra in the Midwest] teacher. And these are viola teachers.

Diane: [00:10:05] I teach violin, and the way I teach viola and violin are very similar. And my degrees are in viola, but my first college teaching job was on viola. My second one was, I won the job as a violist but to be the primary violin and viola teacher. Which is very unusual. Most universities, it's like, "Oh, if you play violin you could teach viola, as like, you know, we're trying to change that precedent."

Diane: [00:10:37] Well, I may be primarily a violist, but I taught violinists all the way through winning concerto competitions and also auditioning and winning. They're getting, I shouldn't say winning but getting, into the schools of their choices, including Cleveland Institute of Music. So, my influence is very heavily in both the viola and violin world.

Diane: [00:11:07] Yeah, so, so many influences in grad school and the people around. And beyond that, I also felt very strongly, and I still do, that you should attend as many master classes as you can. I also was the president of the [state] String Teachers Association when I was--ah man, I was like 30 years old. Thirty-two years old at the time? Somewhere in there, my early 30s. And I got involved in grad school in the American String Teachers Association and later on got involved in the American Viola Society. And, just trying to go to any of those things that I could learn. And I felt I needed to learn more about improvisation. And so, very early on, I got involved in what's actually the liaison for the studio teachers committee and the committee they didn't have a name for yet, which is now the Alt[ernative] styles for ASTA. They were calling it, you know, "alternative music" or "fiddle" or "jazz." They didn't know what to call it, because they didn't want to have it be just one influence. So, but anyway, they.... That included people like Mark O'Connor and Matt Glaser from Berklee, and people like that on the committee and the studio too. So, I brought those two committees together. This would have been in around 19... Maybe 1985? Somewhere in there, in the

mid-90s. So, early on, I was involved in getting classical players to crossover and get involved in improvisation. It's super important for our students to be able to do that.

TR: [00:13:01] So, do you teach any repertoire that you or others might consider non-traditional, and why or why not?

Diane: [00:13:09] Yeah, I do. So, I do have a few albums with different books that have been sent to me about jazz improvisation and things. And they don't use those a whole lot, but my students will sometimes come in with a piece that I do teach improvisation. And I teach it in various styles. Mostly it's influenced by something called Music for People, which is a free improvisation. And I created my own style of teaching improvisation for communication skills. I also do things like musical charades, where you write down words and people play music to those. That kind of.... I'm more into that, though I certainly...I do have a jazz program--a jazz in American music program--and I also do the New American Music Project, so we'll bring in new music as well.

Diane: [00:14:08] And the cover tunes-- my students study cover tunes. So, we do that, but we do it mostly by ear. We don't do a whole lot off the written page when it comes to the jazz stuff. But there are resources out there to help, and also there's j-tudes which is done by....

Diane: [00:14:31] Oh my gosh, I'm just going to blank on his name. I know him so well. That's terrible. He teaches at Berklee. He's a violinist. Hold on one second, because I'm going to ask my daughter. "Hey [name], j-tudes. Who's the violinist?"

Diane: [00:14:44] [response]. Thank you. Jason Anick.

Diane: [00:14:47] He teaches at Berklee. I've done some work with him. And also, Mike Block. He's another big influence, a cellist. He's come in and done some work with us as well as Jeff Saunders. I just, I bring in a lot of different folks to come in and work on those things. Andy Carlson [unclear] the fiddle has written some pedagogical

books in the bluegrass that I.... [your advisor] can tell you more about him. But, um, Andy Carlson did bluegrass and all. Also, when he was a very young person, Christian Howes studied chamber music at a program that I oversaw back when he was 17 years old, and his daughter's been in my chamber music program. So, Christian Howes has also had an influence with him. And one of my teachers right now—[name], he's a cover tune artist and happens to also be my [relative] now. But before that, I knew him as a cover tune artist. One of his sisters studied with me. So, he also works with our students, collaborative teaching.

TR: [00:15:58] What are the factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Diane: [00:16:07] So, I do have a precedence on what they should be exposed to by certain levels. Like, if you're an undergrad, what repertoire you should have to be able to teach when you leave, or what repertoire you need if you're going to do an audition.

Diane: [00:16:26] And then for the pre-college, what repertoire do you need before you get into college? What repertoire should you have at least some exposure to prior to going into an orchestra or something? You know, whatever they think they may be doing. If they want to play chamber music when they get into college but they're not going to major in music, if they're trying to do an audition, I know that they have to have a certain concerto. They need to have their scales. They need to have their etudes.

Diane: [00:16:58] I generally teach all my pre-college students as if they were going to a college audition, so that if they change their mind their senior year--which has happened on several occasions-- that they have it prepared. And that was certainly me. I changed my mind my senior year. And if I hadn't been prepared, I wouldn't have been able to do an audition. So, my teachers have done that for me.

Diane: [00:17:18] So, of course along with that, I see first and foremost what they need musically, technically. So, I'm not going to put a precedence of a piece like, oh this

violinist, "You need to have exposure to the Mozart G Major Concerto before you get into college, but you don't understand how to shift to third position." It's going to be influenced by what I feel they need pedagogically. And then, that shift, that's the path to what they need to play--for the auditions or for future performances, or to be happy and just enjoy the music.

TR: [00:18:00] So, can you talk a little bit more about how you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your students' skill level?

Diane: [00:18:09] How I can? Sorry, I missed the very first part that.

TR: [00:18:13] Can you talk a little bit more about how you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your students' skill level?

Diane: [00:18:18] Oh, okay. Then, I do this for chamber music as well. So, what I'm looking at is the ability to or the need to learn how to count rhythms more intently and to feel the rhythm. I look at the repertoire that's going to... For instance, if you look at the Dancla. You know the Dancla "Air and Varie," the six...?

TR: [00:18:43] Mmhmm.

Diane: [00:18:43] Yeah. So, those I think are extremely important repertoire for us. I look at those, because technically they're not demanding a whole lot of the left hand, but it's specific. It's first position, third position, fifth position. And those positions are obviously foundation positions. They rhythmically are asking to be specific, you know, eighths to 16ths, a little triplet ...longer notes, shorter notes. They're just giving us the whole picture of the basic foundation of rhythm.

Diane: [00:19:23] What I really love about them is that they teach bow technique. And for each variation, like if you Dancla "Variation Number Five" not [unclear] the number five, "Theme and Variations." You're using legato bow stroke in which you can

incorporate--do you know anything about Tuttle Coordination at all? Have you heard about the Karen Tuttle Coordination?

TR: [00:19:45] The name sounds familiar but not the method.

Diane: [00:19:47] Yeah, look that up. It's really fantastic. One of her doctoral students or, actually, one of her... a student of one of her students wrote his dissertation on it and you can look it up. "Karen Tuttle Coordination," I think would give you...that Google search would give this to you.

Diane: [00:20:06] But anyway, you can teach some of these things which are how you incorporate using your head and your body, your knees, to do longer strokes, to make bow strokes connect.

Diane: [00:20:17] And then, the first variation has us thinking about the bow hand balance as well, from frog to tip and how it adjusts for every need. I think about every millimeter of the bow. There's going to be a slight balance change in the hand, arm, body. But it's more specifically, it's more obvious that there's a change from the frog to the middle to the tip.

Diane: [00:20:41] The next variation has us using the middle of the bow with the elbow working. [Sings rhythm.] And then to the ricochet which has to use more the upper part of bow. [Sings melody.] And the different style of how we rotate the forearm [sings rhythm] to going to the frog for this chorus [sings melody] which has us using location in the upper arm in the shoulder joint. And so that transfers--just that variation alone--has us transfer into three very specific parts of the bow pretty quickly. And then it carries on into the variation with the spiccato and the long strokes again. So, anyway, that's an example of what I do when I'm looking for repertoire. And then I would go from there also stepwise: What's now going to push their level in listening skills? Like, going into a contemporary work, that's going to push them to listen to their harmonies differently than in a Mozart or in a Dancla. That kind of work.

TR: [00:21:56] So, to what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Diane: [00:22:04] Wow. Anecdotally, I would say that 90 percent is designated specifically for that student. Ten percent is influenced by--well, maybe it's more, 75 percent. Because I would say, certainly I get influenced by if they're doing a competition, if they have an audition, if they've got their orchestra seating audition and they're worried about that, or they have a youth orchestra audition, or you know. Then my choice of repertoire or the choice of what I need to focus on can get shifted, because you end up "teaching to the test," so to speak.

Diane: [00:22:44] Then there's a small percentage that gets influenced too by what their other teachers feel they need to have worked on. When I say "other teachers," that can be a conductor or the orchestra principal. I also team-teach a lot. So, sometimes when I'm working with another teacher, we'll communicate, and they'll say, "Well, I'm thinking this Bach sonata." And then I'll say, "Okay, I'm thinking about this Kreisler movement to help correlate with that." So like, or actually if I go back to the Dancla again. The E Major Dancla helps with the Bach E Major Partita. Those kind of things.

Diane: [00:23:36] But if there's a teacher I'm working with who has a goal that's slightly different than mine, then we might work together on figuring out what repertoire is going to help that particular piece that that teacher feels is a good influence for them. It's like I'm looking at that kid, and "Oh, that's what you need."

TR: [00:24:02] And besides from, like, auditions and input from other teachers that you teach with, are there any other constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice?

Diane: [00:24:15] Other than.... Sometimes what parents think their children should be doing? That's pretty influential often. There's a negotiation that goes on there often.

Diane: [00:24:28] Or sometimes the kid, too. I mean, sometimes a student comes in and is like, "I want to, you know, learn this Brahms sonata." And you're like, "Oh that's great. Love that. But now you're doing calculus before you've learned to multiply. Let's play, you know, take our steps to be towards that piece."

Diane: [00:24:49] And then there are students or parents who along the way have just brought in music and say, "This is what he--he's going to work on this piece." And then I'm like, "Okay." I'm pretty flexible. So, I'm not. I feel music is flexible, and you can't be too rigid. But I also don't want to set up a kid for frustration... challenges that are going to deter them from enjoying playing.

TR: [00:25:18] So, how do you make your decision if you and the student or are you and the student's parent don't agree on repertoire?

Diane: [00:25:24] Hmm. I haven't had that happen to me in a while, but I know I had a father come in and didn't want his child-- he had two children-- [unclear] they're studying Suzuki with me, and they were like in Book Three, Two or Three at that point. And the father--who was a college professor at Ohio State, had said, and head of his department and very intelligent and brilliant-- had said that once the child learned the piece, they were to move on. They didn't need to practice it anymore. And I said, "Well, you know, your student...The way we learn in music is we learn through review. And so, while we're working on one piece to challenge the mind in one way, we want to challenge the mind in another way through review. So, while you may know the rhythms and the notes, there's so many more layers to music to challenge listening skills, resonance, how we approach the bow... what story. You know, the storytelling, the character that.... I mean, there's so many layers of things, not to mention the theory behind it. Are you playing a root, a third, a [unclear]. How does it fit in the phrase? What is a phrase?" And with him, his comment was, "I only accept the best students in the world, and I want my kids to be like that." And I was like, "Well, we're talking about your five-year-old daughter at this point, not, you know, a graduate student. So, I said, "How do we compromise?" In that, you know... Well, actually I think we did

exactly what I wanted to, which is that we learn a new piece, but they do two or three review choices with this list of things to consider. I think that, I hope, I, you know... They continued on and they played violin up through, until they went to college, as far as I know they continued. I'm not sure what they do with that, so. They seem to be successful.

Diane: [00:27:30] When people.... They've got to trust the teacher. I mean, I have two master's. At that point, I hadn't taught as long. My daughter--my oldest--is 28 right now, and she was probably in elementary school at the time.

Diane: [00:27:46] So, you hope that you can educate not just the student but people who are around the student in a way that's respectful and inspirational. And so your communication skills are super important and trying to have a sense of.... I work with this book called *The Four Agreements*. I'm not sure if you're familiar with it or not, but it's--it helps a ton, in particular for chamber music, but for anything. So, it's like, "Say what you mean...." So, the actual agreement is.... Oh shoot. It's about your word.

Diane: [00:28:43] There' s a lot of different things to it, but you can look them up to get exactly the-- "be true to your word," basically. And the second one is--I might not get them in the right order. Second one is "don't take anything personally," which is like essential for anybody, let alone an artist. The third one is "don't make assumptions," which is basically the root to almost all arguments. And the fourth is "always do your best." And your best will vary depending on if you had enough sleep that day, if you are feeling well, if you're ill, if you're not ill. You know, the sun is shining; the sun is not shining. Your best is going to be different. But you know, just doing those core things: so, thinking before you speak, being a good listener, don't taking things personally--always understand that when somebody's saying something they're coming from their perspective and to allow yourself to hear that perspective and guide that perspective. You know, don't make assumptions. Don't assume that they don't trust. Don't assume that they think they know better. Know that they're again coming from a perspective that they're inspired, and they take it... If they're coming in with a piece that you don't

think is the right piece for them at the moment.... Be happy that they're getting an interest in wanting to do something. And then guide them to how they can get to that place. And then, you know, just do your best. Be there for people and yourself in the best way you possibly can. And that all influences what we do: choosing repertoire to guiding them to make decisions that are going to be helpful for their path in music and reminding people that auditions are only a tiny snapshot and particularly the world of academic-- those kind of auditions.

Diane: [00:30:39] Seeing auditions and things like that for me are very challenging in that I feel that they do more damage than good to most students. And even to our field. Particularly for my chamber music program, which just got recognized by Lincoln Center. We've had groups win the [unclear] last year with the St. Paul String Quartet Competition last year, made it to M-Prize, placed in Coltman. We have done all these international competitions, but I do no auditions. Students do not audition to come into my program. They do not audition to come into a competitive group.

Diane: [00:31:20] So, when I first started the program in 1992, I got a lot of flak that I would have to audition. I wouldn't have strong players. How would you prove the kid? I have 24 ensembles in my program right now. The youngest student I think is eight this semester. The oldest is 19. Though we do have adults coming out, like last semester I had an adult student who was the oldest--late 40s. So, no auditions. And team-teaching also. No group is taught by only one teacher. They're always taught one at a time, but has a team of coaches throughout the semester. I've written some articles about that too, but yeah, it's...super important too in my mind to be open to that particular child and mold their experience with their past, and uniquely.

Diane: [00:32:30] Yet, you have a path that is set before us with post-war education, Suzuki education, a set of... academic world that does expect auditions and job placement often. Except it's auditions that I can say 90 percent, well I'll say [unclear]. I don't bitch. I don't actually think I've actually gotten any of my jobs through an audition, except for one, which was the one where I won the violin-viola position. Everything

else has been somebody knew me, said, "Oh, I think you should hire her." Or somebody knew me. You know, even my orchestra I got that way.... because they were not full-time. You know, I didn't do full-time orchestra. The part-time orchestra stuff is like, "Oh, you need a violist? You need a violinist? Oh, call [Diane]."

Diane: [00:33:19] So, that networking is so incredibly important for people. And then, you know, if you're doing the traditional orchestra job where you're behind a screen and all that. Yes, that's a different path to practice: practicing behind the screen and practicing where you're not watching what you're doing but just recording yourself. You know the steps to doing that too. And of course, a lot of the college educational jobs expect you to play and teach and all that. So, you know, I understand that there's [unclear] to getting to that position too.

Diane: [00:34:05] But again, the student, individual, a student walks in here, and I hope that others will inspire that student to change their course. Their time at school's playing will have an instrumental influence on them. But ideally, it's their path. They're the ones who spend 365 days a year with themselves. Every minute, every second, every minute, every day, you're with yourself.

TR: [00:34:29] Yes. So, moving on a little bit. Has the repertoire that you teach changed over time? And why or why not?

Diane: [00:34:40] Some of it has. Certainly, I've become more familiar with other pieces. And I wanted to incorporate-- you know, because I've been teaching for 30 years, so. Stuff that was written in 1970 or 1980, I wasn't really exposed to a whole lot because it was like barely known to us. And so, 20 years later, it starts to be more available and with IMSLP, which I think is a novel resource, we're learning more and more about possible repertoire that we just didn't know existed. And from all periods.

Diane: [00:35:19] And also, I'm very involved in the New American Music Project. There are the [name of] Festival, New American Music Project that I started but that's

more chamber music. But the [name of] Festival is at [small, private college in the Midwest] every other year, and they bring in tons of composers. I don't know how many. Twenty, 30, 40 composers come in. And we get hundreds of scores to look at. And so, we can find pieces out there.

Diane: [00:35:44] Also some of the colleges now are requiring--particularly in the viola world-- are requiring pieces that... one selection that is post-1950, which I think is really good, for all of us. You know, the Reger suites that were written in the... or Hindemith, or Rebecca Clark... these pieces that were written in the early 1900s are over... they're over a hundred years old now! [Laughs.] We need to figure out what's being written now and what can be used, or even what was written 40 years ago that's not being played.

Diane: [00:36:24] I love the Leonard Bernstein violin.... Oh my gosh, I can't think of the title of it right now. He has a solo violin concerto that's just beautiful. And I taught that a few years ago to one of my students who is going to CIM. And I heard it recently too, but umm...Boston.... Of course, because of Bernstein's anniversary, I think Boston Phil had it played. But, you know, I didn't know anything about that piece when I was in grad school.

Diane: [00:36:54] So, and when I was really sort of learning what I should be teaching and what was expected, generally...like your Mozart, your Haydn, and, you know, your Sarasate, the Kreisler.

TR: [00:37:12] How often do you teach pieces that you've never learned yourself?

Diane: [00:37:17] It's actually quite a bit. The viola world not as much, but in the violin world, more so, because I.... Okay, I'll go back to about 15 years ago. I taught at [small private college in the Midwest], which is where I had the position as the primary violin teacher and viola teacher. I had a student come in wanting to learn the Barber Violin Concerto. I had not studied that as a violinist. And I remember going to Almita Vamos,

who I was doing some work with Vamoses because I was the chair of the solo competition for ASTA, and they had a lot of students doing it. So, we happened to be at dinners together and things like that and committees together. And I said, "Almita, I have to teach the Barber Violin Concerto. Could you share with me some ideas and thoughts, even passages, fingerings, or bowings that you have thoughts about or ideas about." And she said to me, "You are a beautiful musician. Go for what you want to do instinctually."

Diane: [00:38:29] I really wanted [unclear]. You know, and you can obviously get those ideas, but then if you're always doing it with somebody else's ideas, what kind of intent are you creating? I mean it's nice to have those guidance, that guidance. So, I had to go and do that. Also, I get-- on both instruments, my students bring me orchestral rep from youth orchestra and stuff. And I didn't learn that rep. I didn't learn the first violin part of the Firebird. [Laughs.] Oh my goodness.

Diane: [00:39:08] So, you have to take the knowledge you have and assess what you can. And that's where I also love teaching. You have a resource of really wonderful symphony players here in town. Get a coaching session on that piece with that person. And so, for instance, with my violin students, I would often, when Paul Kantor was teaching at CIM or about 2 1/2 hours away from Cleveland, but I was also teaching at CIM for 10 years or so-- I was conducting their advanced prep orchestra. I would go up there, and I would arrange for my violin students to have lessons with Paul, usually. And so, I'd be like, "Hey, here is perfect. I've been doing this work on the Bruch Violin Concerto, and we'll play for Paul, and we'll get some more comments and influences." And that's, that's great. That's a great resource to help with. So, I am definitely not a teacher who is afraid to send their students to get other influences.

Diane: [00:40:16] I love it, actually. I encourage it. It's super important for people to do that. And I respect those teachers who feel that they need to be the one and only teacher. I wish more for their students, in that they also can have other influences. And mostly teachers do allow their students to play in master classes and encourage their students to

play in master classes. I've come across a few who did not want their students playing in master classes. [pause] And... I hope to influence those people in a positive way to open their hearts open their arms to other interpretations, but.

TR: [00:41:04] Okay, so we're almost to the...

Diane: [00:41:08] It's rare, by the way. Very rare.

TR: [00:41:10] Oh, okay, yeah.

Diane: [00:41:10] You know, that you'll, I mean, very rare that you'll find a teacher like that, you know.

TR: [00:41:15] So, we're almost to the end of the interview. I just have a few quick questions for you. Since you're primarily a violist, do you also teach viola? And about what proportion of your studio is violinists versus violists if you do teach violists?

Diane: [00:41:38] My college studio is-- this semester, I have one violin student and four viola students. There have been years when it's been equal. I've had just as many violin students as viola students. In my pre-college, it's about half: half for viola, half for violin. And I actually have several students out of that half.... My violin students-- several of them also play viola and vice versa. I expect my violists to learn violin just as much as I expect my violinists to learn viola. I think the viola influences the bow technique so much, and the violin influences the left hand technique in really positive ways. So, all of my students have some exposure to both. And…all my pre-college students.

Diane: [00:42:26] My college students, it's a little more challenging, because they have to, you know, they have course curriculum and course requirements that we have to follow. They have more limited time.

TR: [00:42:40] Do you keep a repertoire list?

Diane: [00:42:53] I do have a repertoire list that I think included with.... Several years ago, I was on a committee with ASTA for their pedagogy book, their repertoire. And I created a viola list for that. Since then, I don't really keep a formal list, but I have files and files of music. So, I keep more of what I would say, more of a list in my head than an actual, formal list.

Diane: [00:43:27] But I will create a list for students. Like when I do a journal with my students. And so, we'll have a goal list, and we'll create a list of what I want them to do over the summer or what we're thinking of doing over the next year or even the next four years. Like, over the course of four years, we're going to look at this repertoire. And we review it as we go along. And we do change it when it makes sense to change it. So that kind of list, yep, that's formalized, but not repertoire lists that I can say, "Here. Here's the list of repertoire." But I have created more formally for articles or for different courses I've taught a more formalized list of progressive set of repertoire. But it's so individualized, you know, it will make you want to go off in a different direction. I'd rather make a list for individual students than one that is best-fit-all.

TR: [00:44:36] Right. Of course that makes sense considering what you've said about personalizing everything for your students. So, do you have anything else that you want to say on repertoire that you feel wasn't addressed by the questions?

Diane: [00:44:56] Oh yeah. One other thing is I feel very strongly that the [unclear] for college auditions, like if you're going into, like wanting to audition for college. I hear it over and over again, and I've always felt this way, and I'm happy to hear that a lot of my colleagues agree: Play the piece that shows off what you do well at this point and your potential as opposed to choosing repertoire that you think they want to hear. I think it's much more important that you go on a piece that you're confident with and that you can show nuance and maturity in understanding phrasing and feel to tell a compelling story with than playing something that is currently a reach for your technique. And I've just

heard that over and over again with my colleagues as well who are at major conservatories, and it's much better for them to hear something that a student's coming feeling confident with than to hear them playing something that they're struggling with or that you hear moments they're struggling with.

Diane: [00:46:02] And that's sometimes a hard sell. Sometimes they feel that they should be playing a certain level of piece when, you know, they could go in playing just. Like Hoffmeister, I'd put the Stamitz on the viola world. Or to underestimate the power of Mozart G Major played well. As opposed to playing Wieniawski or something not so well. Lalo would be probably a better example, or something like that. [Unclear].

TR: [00:46:50] Okay, so, yeah. Thank you so much for interviewing. That's the end, and I will send you a transcript of your interview, so that you'll get a chance to review it.

Grace.2019-01-18

TR: [00:02:17] And do you consent?

Grace: [00:02:19] Absolutely, yes.

TR: [00:02:21] Great. How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Grace: [00:02:30] I have been teaching in a studio setting...definitely since 2003, but I was teaching while I was in college as well--probably around 2001.

TR: [00:02:43] And how many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Grace: [00:02:49] At this point, over the last four or five years, I have had probably around 35, 36 students.

TR: [00:03:01] And what is the fewest and greatest number of students that you have taught at one time?

Grace: [00:03:09] Well... it has been my career... Probably the fewest students... was maybe 12 in a private studio, but at the time I was working with a program where I taught 30 to 40 lessons a week. So, at that point, depending on how you want to categorize "private studio" --my own personal students, I had about 12. But at the same time, I was working with 30 or 40 individual students a week in a program. So, you know, and while I was in college, I probably only had about 10 students while I was [unclear].

TR: [00:03:47] Yeah, that's great. And please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Grace: [00:03:57] So, typically I like to start students very, very young: maybe four or five. And truthfully, this is the first time I've been anywhere longer than three years, so it's been a pretty young studio. I would say the typical range of students is from about five years old, sometimes a little younger, through maybe sixth or seventh grade. But now, for the first time, my studio ranges in age from--I have a five-year-old, I have a high schooler, and I also have a few adults.

Grace: [00:04:35] And as far as ability, pre-Twinkle, like never having studied, brand-new beginner through up to, like, I had some students that are just now finishing up Bach A Minor, and we're looking over repertoire lists to see where we go from here for them.

TR: [00:04:53] Sorry, you cut out there. And you're looking at repertoire that will...?

Grace: [00:04:56] So, I have a couple students who just finished Bach A Minor Concerto, and we're-- actually, they just, just finished it. And so we're sitting down with some repertoire lists to go over what comes next.

TR: [00:05:10] Oh, okay. Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

[00:05:28] It's a very long answer, but I'll make it short. [Laughs]. I started very, very young. I started when I was five. I started asking when I was three. And right after I started, we moved to New Jersey [for two years] from Indiana. And so I started over, and then we switched teachers, and then she wanted to start me over. And then we moved back to Indiana, and they wanted to start me over. And, so I had a lot of different teachers, a lot of different ideas on how to play.

Grace: [00:05:59] And by the time I was in high school, it was pretty clear that there was no consistency. There were a lot of things missing in skill and technique. So, when I went to school at [small, private school in the Midwest,] I had the opportunity to not only take violin lessons and do that as my major, but I studied with [director of School of Talent Education in Illinois] in his Suzuki-like classes and got my Suzuki certification through Book Four with him. And that made a huge difference.

Grace: [00:06:28] So, I would say between my high school teacher--who really was able to locate the things that were missing in my own playing and show me how to systematically change those things, and that if I have the right education I can do something with my skill-- and being in this incredible pedagogy class with [same director] and just sort of getting an idea what the Suzuki books can do for a young kid and how that sets them up for later.

Grace: [00:06:55] So, I also had an amazing, amazing teacher after college who worked with me and whose name was David Wolfe, and he was in Chicago and just... Everything about how he taught was inspiring. He didn't try to be inspiring. He just had complete confidence in a student's ability to play if they have the right education, if they

have the right teaching. And it was just so, so nice as a student to just know that I had the tools necessary to play well if I put them to good use. And so that's really how I teach. Like, I sort of understand that if I can figure out a way for a student to understand what they're doing, they can be successful if they do a piece.

TR: [00:07:46] That's well-said. What are factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Grace: [00:07:56] So, since I start with teeny-tinies, I follow the Suzuki books pretty faithfully. I occasionally will substitute some things in, whether for fun and motivation or because they need an extra review on some skill. And I usually...just, you know-- I have books that I've used since I was little, whether it's a fiddle tune or holiday music or-- Occasionally, I will write something, especially if it's for a group and I need four different people with four different skills to work on. I'll just write them something, so that they each can have something to work on with appropriate harmonies or whatever.

Grace: [00:08:33] Beyond really about Book Six--The truth is that I really haven't had that much opportunity to work with my students. This is the first time I've been around a kid more than four years. When you start them at scratch, usually don't get that far in four years. And so, I am really looking forward to sort of seeing where we go.

Grace: [00:08:57] I know there's a question later, so I'll mention it now, but I know you're going to ask about it later. I have a list from Mimi Zweig and also Dorothy DeLay about how they supplemented materials according to where students were in Suzuki repertoire. And I find that list extremely helpful, because it gives me a very concrete idea of what the level of the piece is because I know the Suzuki repertoire so well.

TR: [00:09:21] So, do you consider yourself primarily a Suzuki teacher then?

Grace: [00:09:25] Yes.

TR: [00:09:29] Okay. And how do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your students' skill level?

Grace: [00:09:36] I think it's extraordinarily important. I don't think anything else is more important. If you give somebody something that is too easy, then they're bored and they're going to play sloppy because they're not challenged. If you give them something that is too hard, they're going to be defeated and they're going to give up because it's a skill they can't reach. If it's something that a student is ready for a challenge, then you still pick something that's within their grasp, just something they have to work harder for. I think it's extremely important that if a student is having a really hard time with something, even the Suzuki repertoire, then we do exercises and other pieces and other things to make sure that they've reached whatever skills they're having trouble with. And if they're bored out of their mind, then we need to move forward. We need to give them either supplemental material or just be done with a few pieces and move on and treat them as exercises and give them something they can sink their teeth into.

TR: [00:10:34] So, what do you... How do you make your decision if you and the student do not agree on repertoire, for example, if they're bored?

Grace: [00:10:42] My students are little, so they really don't disagree with me. You know, like they're tiny. They're six, seven, eight, nine, 10-years-old. And so. And they started with me since they were even smaller. So we have a really good bond of trust and respect. And so if they really don't like a piece, and if they sort of understand that well, "there's something I need to learn from it," I'm very clear what the skill is they need to learn. And they work on that skill, and we can be done with it.

Grace: [00:11:13] The rare occasion that I've had.... I did have a student--a couple students who studied with me through high school-- And if they really, really, really hated the piece, then I would condense it down to the skills I needed them to learn and

maybe a section that made sure that they had those skills. And if they could play those very well, if they could demonstrate to me that they had the skills they need, then we could discuss another piece. But they didn't just get to call the shot, and say, "I don't like this piece, so I'm not going to play this music." That's just not--I've never had a teacher do that for me. I don't think it shows respect to the music, even if you don't like music. Every piece of music has something that you can gain from it. It's worth taking the time to do.

TR: [00:11:57] Since you work with such young kids, do parents influence your repertoire choices at all?

Grace: [00:12:04] Only in the way that I ask parents if there is anything that is really important for their family: a style of music, a piece of music, a, you know, anything--like, I have a family that is Hungarian, and so it's pretty important to them that he's learning music relevant to his culture. They go back every year to visit family. They have property there, like it's really important to them that that become part of his musical background.

Grace: [00:12:38] I have students that are Jewish, and it's important to them that they have that music in their studies. I have had quite a few Latino students, and it's very, very important to them that they learn pieces that are relevant to what their family knows, and that they can play for their grandmas and grandpas, and do a Skype with their aunt or uncle in Mexico and be able to play something that they recognize. That really motivates them. It makes the family more likely to support them and to encourage them to keep playing. So, in that way, yes, they influence repertoire, but not like: "I'm going to take this piece, because it's good for a skill." It's: "I'm going to pick this, because it's good for your soul, and I know it will help you be a good musician and be excited about what you're playing."

TR: [00:13:36] So, it sounds like picking music that reflects their cultural background is one way you personalize repertoire for each student.

Grace: [00:13:42] Yeah.

TR: [00:13:43] Are there other ways you do that as well?

Grace: [00:13:45] I guess I do. Like, I wrote my own pre-Twinkle books, because I know there are skills that students need. So, it's not individualized for students, but it's very much constructed out of the experience I've had with individual students.

Grace: [00:14:06] I do write not necessarily repertoire, but I write a lot of exercises for students. I write a lot of things for them to practice that is very individualized. Just because-- that... they may need a slightly different skill. If two kids are working on the same piece, they're not going to have the same exact needs. And so, though the piece is the same, the exercises they have may not-- the etudes they have--may not be the same. So those things are much more individualized.

Grace: [00:14:39] Like I said, and once we get out of Book Five, Book Six, which is where I am right now--so, talk to me again in a year--it is much more individualized. So, I have one student that is probably going to go on from the Bach A Minor to another pretty heavy concerto. The other student is probably going to go on to something a little bit more melodic, because that one needs to work on a cleaner bow and faster fingers and understanding how to phrase things when it's difficult. The other one really needs to work on thinking about a smooth, gorgeous tone and developing her vibrato. So, there's different directions they need to go even though they were both very successful at their current piece.

TR: [00:15:25] Absolutely. Maybe you already answered this in the previous questions, but do you have a teaching philosophy? And if so, describe it as it relates to repertoire that you choose.

Grace: [00:15:41] I remember reading this question and being like, "Oh man, I could write an essay on that. [Laughs.] I think. Mostly it. I really do. And it isn't just private teaching. I also work at the public school system in the city. It was really, really.... it is a school system that is not terribly keen on taking care of music, and kind of lets a lot of kids down. And I really, really do believe that if a child has good instruction, is respected and believed in, and they are willing to do the things that are asked of them--if those things are reasonable, that they will be successful. Whether they're four, and you treat them like a four-year-old, and you allow them to be four and you work with them at their level, or they're in high school and nobody's ever taught them why a scale is played the way it's played. It's just breaking things down into their elemental parts and showing how each skill is mastered. And not in an overwhelming, scary way, in a "'hey look, you can do this' way." And giving them the independence to be able to do that and the trust to do that. And if they--I always tell my students you can play a wrong note, but play it beautifully. Make it the most beautiful wrong note so that you can hear it. You can know what made it not right, and you can do something about it. But if you're not getting a pretty sound, your instrument is giving you information. So let's listen to that sound, figure out why it's not good, and then make the change you need to do it. I don't like to say, "fix something," because I don't think anything's broken, a change just needs to be made. So, if you can get condense that down into something cute and short, please send it to me. That'd be great. [Laughs.]

TR: [00:17:31] That sounds like a very empowering way to think about teaching and learning.

TR: [00:17:39] Did you want to say--maybe not-- but did you want to say anything about how your philosophy relates to the repertoire that you choose?

Grace: [00:17:50] I guess, this actually plays out more in not my private teaching but when I'm working with my public school kids: I usually pick music that is slightly below what they're used to playing but with a much higher expectation of the quality of their playing. So, I teach by goals not by piece. This is probably the biggest thing you

need to know: I teach by goal and not by piece. I really don't care what they're playing. I need them to play according to what the skills are of the piece and how it sounds. And so, if a four-year-old is playing "Twinkle," or an 18-year-old is playing Lalo, they both need to have appropriate skills for those pieces. And it's not that the Twinkle has to be all right and the Lalo can have a bunch of mistakes because it's harder. No, if you're playing Lalo, you should be ready for Lalo.

Grace: [00:18:41] So, I think it's when I work with students-- especially students who have been playing for a long time without good instruction, which in my studio I don't really have. I've started almost all of my kids, so I don't have transfer students much. But in my other teaching, I encounter a lot of students who've been playing for a long time, and nobody's ever taught them what to do and how to be in charge of their playing. And so they're very frustrated, and they really are kind of shocked when I set my expectation for them, and it includes them actually sounding really good. And, you know, I think sometimes they're not happy with being given a lower-level piece, but when they realize that now they're in control of their own tone, and a year from now they'll actually be ready for the piece they want to play, usually students are really excited about that. They're excited that an adult is looking at them and saying, "Hey, I have enough confidence in you and enough respect for you to expect you to be excellent."

TR: [00:19:47] Has a repertoire that you teach changed over time, and why or why not?

Grace: [00:19:54] So, I really wish I could say yes. But I can't. It has not changed. [Laughs.] I wish I could say yes, because I think that that kind of evolving is good for a human soul, and it's good for a teacher to sort of delve into new things. But at this point, I just-- have always been a studio--well, except for the last four years, the last four years I have been exclusively a studio teacher. But I've always been working other full-time or part-time jobs as well. And so, I guess I wish that I could get to know other pieces better and go and hang out with other teachers more and see what they do. I think that would be incredibly exciting for me. It would be wonderful for my students. But the

truth of the matter is: I have been sort of stuck in my own little work bubble, and it hasn't changed much. And my students are doing well, and so I don't feel a lot of pressure to change it. But I do wish that I had more repertoire under my belt. I do wish that when I walk into a room full of 18-year-olds, that I could give them music that they haven't already heard 45 times.

TR: [00:21:12] Is there anything more that you would say about why you haven't learned more repertoire or why you haven't learned more repertoire to teach?

Grace: [00:21:24] Partly, I--it sounds really crazy-- but I haven't played much repertoire that is relevant to my students outside of the Suzuki repertoire, so I'm not exactly sure where to start. Which sounds really dumb, because I've been teaching a really long time. But, it's kind of daunting to sort of go, "Okay, well let's open this piece of music and see what it does and what it doesn't." And to try something new with the student is kind of scary when I know something else works. You know, and to give them something that I don't know the whole piece inside and out and I can tell by their question in a text what measure they're in and how to help them. That's a little daunting to me to sort of take that on. But it is something that I hope to sort of do more of. Yeah, I think it's mostly that I'm kind of stuck in my little happy place and haven't had a real reason to get out of it other than I just really should.

TR: [00:22:26] So, when you do teach repertoire that you've never previously learned yourself, how often do you do so, and then why?

Grace: [00:22:36] If I do it, it's for more advanced students, and I do it usually because there's some specific skill they need. And so, then I start calling all my teacher friends and I say, "Hey, what do you give of this level student that needs to work on this set of skills?" And, I look through those pieces and sort of play with them and that's how I try and pick something. And it's usually pretty successful, but it's also... truthfully not something I do very much, not something that I do probably as much as they should, in fact.

Grace: [00:23:16] But I usually ask for outside input. My husband is a teacher as well, and so I ask his advice. I will play pieces a lot, and I'll try and sort of figure out how this piece would feel to my students, how does it relate to the pieces they've already played? How much harder is it? How much easier is it in some places? What other skills are there? Then really try and break it down into what it takes to play the piece to make sure that it's appropriate for whoever is getting it.

TR: [00:23:50] Ummhmm. And can you talk a little bit about the supplemental repertoire that you choose and why you choose those pieces?

Grace: [00:23:59] [Unclear] the beginning, I have this little list. This little list is super-duper, crazy helpful. We--so, my husband and I—[studied various methods of string pedagogy (Mimi Zweig, Suzuki, and Paul Rolland) with Darcy Drexler during our graduate program at a public university in the Midwest] And the curriculum is basically what [Mimi Zweig] uses. And she has relied on her own experiences and also she worked with Ivan Galamian and Dorothy DeLay and has a lot of their information too. And so, partly I will go over these pieces with a student. I'll say, "Hey, these are some options for you. Let's take some time. Look at these pieces in the lesson. Listen to some pieces. Let me hear your feedback. Let me give you my feedback." You know, sort of, "let's see how big your eyes bulge out when it gets to the fast part." And, that list helps me a lot, like a lot a lot, because I just-- I don't have that much experience teaching more advanced students. I haven't been around a kid long enough to get there. It's kind of exciting.

TR: [00:25:09] I'm hearing that time is a big constraint. Are there other constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice?

Grace: [00:25:21] Experience. Experience. I mean, if I was working with, you know... Like, three, four, five years from now when my students are getting past Book Five, Book Six into we need to look outside Suzuki repertoire and do more varied kinds of

music, now I have to. But I haven't had to. And, I think that with experience, I will get more confident and more comfortable looking through these pieces. I'll get to know them better. But I think right now, I haven't needed to really do that much. I'm really happy with the Suzuki program for younger students and for less advanced students. And I'm just to a point now that I got to get over it. They need to branch out more, and.... The way this little list is set up is it sort of says-- like, one of the one of the headings is: "Sequence of Repertoire from Book Four through a Book Eight." It has Book Four, Book Five, Book Six, Book Seven, Book Eight sort of all lined up with what would go with it. And then it has-- like, I have Dorothy DeLay's Concerto Sequence, what she does: first, second, and third in different groups.

Grace: [00:26:38] I have all the etudes arranged by level; it's super, super useful. So, if I know a student.... It helps me to have the etudes, for instance, because I know that if they're working on--oh, let's say Ševčík -- then that helps me look at pieces and go, "Okay, they're getting these skills for this passage from this etude book." But it's just sort of piecemeal right now for me. Does that make sense? Like, I just really don't have the experience branching out from Suzuki repertoire, because my kids are tiny.

TR: [00:27:15] Yeah.

Grace: [00:27:16] They're just little.

TR: [00:27:19] If you've always taught the same age level, that makes perfect sense.

Grace: [00:27:21] Well, yeah, because I taught in [small town in Midwest where Grace completed undergraduate degree] for about three years, and then I moved here, and then I was in grad school, and then I taught at a school with private students for about five years, but I was really constrained by their program, and then I've had my own studio now for four years. So, it's just every time starting over with beginners, and so you just sort of have to wait for that moment when "Hey, we get to do something new!" And that's where I am right now.

TR: [00:27:54] And is there any particular reason why Book Five or Six is the point in the Suzuki repertoire where you feel that you need to branch out?

Grace: [00:28:05] Three reasons. One: I feel like I don't know the more advanced Suzuki repertoire any more well than I know other repertoire. So, it doesn't give me the security that the younger books do, that earlier books do. And so, if I'm going to branch out, I might as well do it there. Because, why not? I don't know those older pieces as well. Two: I'm really, really, really sick of Classical and Baroque music by then. Like, I'm really sick of it. I really need them to play something else. I'm losing my mind. And there are skills that I know I miss. You know, like, you don't gain the confidence of having faster passages, bigger shifts, more of that virtuosic skill, that you just don't see in Suzuki. Like you just don't see it. You don't have a gradual build up to those things. And so you get done with Suzuki, and you go, "Huh, I can't play Lalo no matter what I would do." Like, "I don't know how to even approach fast arpeggios like that. I don't know what to do with that." And so, I really feel like doing some of the easier, more approachable show pieces and building up not just the skill but the confidence to figure that out and to just go for it. And if you [unclear] it, and it's horrible: "Okay, well let's figure out why." Instead of: "I've never seen this before. I don't know what to do with it. It's scary. It doesn't sound good. I quit."

TR: [00:29:41] Yeah.

Grace: [00:29:44] So, that's, that's why. It's partly I need... I want students to be able to have a little more freedom in what they're playing and also part of me knowing repertoire really, really, really well is that--like in the Suzuki music--is that I kind of already know what's going to happen before it happens as far as difficult spots and things like that. So, I'm sure there are times that I sort of preemptively expect something to be hard that might not be hard if I didn't expect it. They might just be able to do it. They might just go for it. And so, branching out into music I don't know as well is a good chance for them to just sort of not have me expecting things to be hard because

[laughs] I don't know it as well. I think that that is mostly why. I just, I'm kind of, I'm tired of it. And I think they are too. And the skills that I want to see moving forward are not exactly the skills I see present in the Suzuki repertoire.

TR: [00:30:55] That's really interesting that you say that knowing the repertoire so deeply actually becomes a disadvantage.

Grace: [00:31:00] Only because I do think-- I know what 90 percent of the students have trouble with. So, if you have an expectation for your kid to have trouble somewhere, they're going to have trouble there. Whereas, if you sort of go, "hey, this looks like fun; let's see what happens," then maybe they'll just go for it. They don't know it's hard.

Grace: [00:31:27] At least at that level. They have enough independent skill to sort of take things on. And I, just sort of thinking about how to move forward with these few students that I have that are at a higher level now, like, "Huh, how do I sort of give them the freedom to royally screw up a fast passage, figure it out, and come back stinkin' proud of themselves." You know so.

TR: [00:31:59] Okay, so moving on. Are there any pieces that you always teach or never teach based on students' skill level, age, or other factors?

Grace: [00:32:11] Well, that is Suzuki repertoire. Yeah. Pretty solidly through, you know, all of that. Other pieces that I do or do not teach...?

TR: [00:32:23] Or if you used to teach a piece but do not anymore?

Grace: [00:32:36] I don't think I have banned any repertoire from my studio. [Laughs.] I don't think so. [Pause.] No, I mean there are things that... [pause] No, like I skip some stuff, but it's not something like I once taught it and now don't. But, that's all kind of [unclear], like, I don't skip it for everybody. So, no, not really.

TR: [00:33:12] Okay. Yeah, I know it's kind of an odd question to think about stuff that you never teach. So, we're basically at the end of the interview. Do you have anything more to say that wasn't addressed by the questions about repertoire?

Grace: [00:33:30] The only thing is that I'm really excited you're doing this, and I'm really curious to see what things you find. And so, if it's possible, I'd really like you to stay in contact and let me know sort of what your findings are, because this is something that every teacher I know has one of two feelings about: They totally struggle with it, or they go, "Eh, this is what I do, and that's what I do. Done."

Grace: [00:34:00] I don't know anybody that's just totally comfortable with exploring things and that is in a place of--other than the people that are like "this is what I do, and I'm done." You know, it just feels like this is something that is really important. And, I don't know exactly how to go about it. And all the teachers I know don't exactly know how to go about it. And it's usually like, "Hey I don't know what to do next. I guess you need a new teacher?"

Grace: [00:34:30] And that's really hard, because, like, I can't send my nine-year-old who cries every time he plays a C# out of tune to a teacher that's going to yell at him every time he plays a C# out of tune. He's an excellent player. He's an excellent player. He just got third place in the concerto competition for... he's nine. It's the first one he's ever done. Like, he's a great player. But he needs to be with a teacher that works with young kids. And so, I can't just send him to a teacher that is going to kick his butt. I have to figure out how to find repertoire for him. And so, I'm really, really curious as to what you find.

Louisa.2019-01-28

TR: [00:02:02] And do you consent?

Louisa: [00:02:04] I do.

TR: [00:02:05] Okay, thanks. How many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Louisa: [00:02:13] I've taught for about 18 years, but part of that was in college. So, I noticed that you differentiated that. So, professionally out of school--since I went to school forever--this has been five years.

TR: [00:02:37] And how many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Louisa: [00:02:43] So, it varies. Right now, I have the most I've ever had. I have 53 students. Yeah, at different schools. When I had my own business in New Orleans, I had 13 private students, and then I taught at a school, which is more of a group setting. I don't know how many I had at that school. And you asked about the smallest? Probably would have been four, while I was studying, I think. [Pause]. So, yeah, it ranges, for sure.

TR: [00:03:27] And you said you teach at schools right now, too, as well?

Louisa: [00:03:32] Yeah. So, you found me through the Suzuki Academy website. That's my main job. But when I first moved here, I didn't have that many students here at that school, so I added a couple days just teaching. So, in Texas, they have a huge music program in the public schools, and they're very competitive, and so they bring in private teachers after school to have. And some of them actually bring in private teachers during the school day, so they get time out of class, I guess. I'm not sure how they do that, but it's pretty competitive.

Louisa: [00:04:18] So, I teach one day a week in that setting, where I'm basically tutoring them trying to get them through their orchestral music, and then I have about eight private students where I go to their houses individually.

TR: [00:04:34] And, over the years that you've been teaching in a studio or one-to-one setting, what would you say is about the average number of students you've had?

Louisa: [00:04:46] Past average--I'll just roll it out. These last three years.... Okay, let's see. Maybe about 25, 30, would be the average.

TR: [00:05:01] Thanks. Please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Louisa: [00:05:06] I've started probably three and a half to four, and I'm probably up to 65. Now, my oldest is probably 45 one [unclear] of my students.

TR: [00:05:26] And as far as ability level?

Louisa: [00:05:29] Yes, so that ranges as well. So, that's total beginner and through....Right now, I don't have any college-level, but I do have some students playing concertos that would be considered--that I've heard college students play, let's say, like entry-level college kids. So, right now I'm more on the younger beginner level. But I do have a few up there.

TR: [00:06:08] Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This could include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

Louisa: [00:06:22] Okay. So, I started violin a little bit late, when I was nine-years-old, later than a lot of people do. But I did not have a very good foundation. I started with a full-sized violin. My teacher was not much of--she's more of a player that decided to teach, because she needed the money. And this was a friend of our family. So, I didn't have a lot of motivation or serious goals as a kid, even though I was surrounded by music all the time. My family is a musician family.

Louisa: [00:07:09] But then, later in high school, I decided to go to college, studied music, studied violin, and so I started.... That's when I started [unclear] my first concertos and had to audition for school. Since I was really far behind, I did a lot of music education stuff as well, and my teacher really. Basically, because of his background and the fact that I got in too deep, too fast, and into pieces that were too difficult for me, I believe--partly I just wanted to play them, and my teachers didn't [laughs] rein me in, you know. In one sense, that was helpful, because I learned from my mistakes, and I ended up doing things I never would have done if I had been carefully controlled through the whole experience.

Louisa: [00:08:18] But I think that's a flaw in my teaching a lot right now, because I err on the side of easier pieces for students and preparing way in advance for any performance that comes up, because I've really sort of been scarred myself with being over-extended and being too far to getting ahead of myself because I really love the music I'm playing. So, on the other side of that, though, because I wouldn't have practiced so hard if I was so motivated to play specific pieces. So, I also take that into account when students bring a piece and say, you know, "I have to play this piece now." And so I need to look at--I also look at their intensity and their desire to play that piece as a significant factor in how we go forward. [Pause.] Do you need more background?

TR: [00:09:30] No, that's great. That's perfect. So, other than intensity or this desire on the part of the student to play a piece, what are the factors that are most important to you in choosing repertoire for or with individual?

Louisa: [00:09:47] So, I think--and just a little caveat here: I'm following Suzuki books right now mostly, most of the time. My school is pretty strict. We have a graduation process which requires--are you familiar with the Suzuki school at all?

TR: [00:10:06] Yes.

Louisa: [00:10:07] So, it requires every student to perform from memory all the pieces in the book and they record them, because our director lives in L.A. So, he wants to personally watch everybody's graduation to basically ensure a similar level of each studio. He does that for violin, piano, and guitar--everybody.

Louisa: [00:10:36] So, I have a--I'm sort of constricted by that, in the sense that they need to get through the books in order to move on to the next book. So, it takes a little bit longer. As a result, they're also learning them more in depth. And so that has changed my teaching a lot in terms of trying to also get across to the kids how much better it is to know something very well rather than skim the top of pieces. [Pause.]

Louisa: [00:11:16] So, just as we go forward that's what mostly... that informs a lot of the pieces that we choose. Then, outside of that, what happens in Texas anyway, is when they get in orchestra starting in middle school and then in high school, they have every year solo and ensemble contests. So, they are required to choose a solo. Sometimes they do small groups as well trios, quartets, duets, whatever. But, a lot of times the director is very aggressive about the piece they want kids to play, and they usually aim much higher than their capabilities, because they have three levels: one, two, and three. And level one is…ranges from "Meditation" from Thais to Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, solo Bach, whatever. You know, high school kids can play that in this area, which is awesome, but once you... So, if you finish a level two, which is something like Carl Bohm's "Sarabande" or Seitz Pupil's concerto, not the ones in the Suzuki books, but more advanced ones. So, if they perform at that level and they get a score of a one, which is the best, they have to move on to level one the next year.

Louisa: [00:12:55] So, within there, they have a huge selection but within that, I look for--personally I look for the easiest maybe five pieces that I can find and have them listen to them and then choose within those five. Because the student really informs me about their connection to a piece. And it's really--I find the most motivating way for success is for them to say, "You know I don't like fast pieces, I like melodic pieces." So, we look for something that is surrounding their character, maybe.

Louisa: [00:13:48] Sometimes they don't know what they like until I hear it. But I try to filter down the options first to something that I feel is reasonable for their level and also given their time constraints. When you start the process--when they tell me that they have taken it on--you know, sometimes it's a little late. [Pause.] Can you repeat the question one more time? It seems that's all I have.

TR: [00:14:21] That's more than enough, unless you feel like have more? It was about factors of repertoire selection. But I actually have a follow-up.

Louisa: [00:14:29] Okay, sure.

TR: [00:14:30] So, what did your repertoire selection process look like before you taught in Texas and just, was it significantly different?

Louisa: [00:14:41] You know, I think it has changed a lot. Living here just has been.... Having this huge list and you might check it out, actually. I can send you the link of pieces that are available and what they think of as in this category or that category. To be fair, I only had two years of not being in school teaching before I moved to Texas. That was in New Orleans, and my most advanced students were in Book Four of Suzuki. So, I didn't have the need really to explore a whole lot outside of those books and the Barbara Barber collections, which I like. These are great pieces, and so, why look further? Right?

Louisa: [00:15:43] But being here and having the kids also bring me so much varied repertoire and say, "My teacher says I have to play this." That has been really educational for me, actually. And I think also while I was studying and I was a graduate assistant and teaching that way, my personal time constraint kept me from exploring further than pieces that I knew already. Now that I think about it, I just didn't have time to explore on their behalf as much as I probably should have.

TR: [00:16:30] Okay. And do you have a teaching philosophy, and if so describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose.

Louisa: [00:16:37] Yeah. My personal philosophy is to really to make them think about what they're playing and engage with it. So, in terms of choosing repertoire, I try to get them to choose pieces that it's going to make them pay attention and find creative ways to get around technical problems. For example, if there is something that is just monumentally confusing and difficult for them, usually what happens.... I just had a boy bring me the Mozart Third Violin Concerto, and he's just performing Accolay this February. And I am on the fence about whether to--again, this was his orchestra director. He's the top in his middle school orchestra, and this orchestra director just seemed to take it on to, I don't know, as her prodigy or something. And say, "Here, you should play this for a competition." And got him all excited about it. So, on the one hand, he is very stubborn, and he doesn't like to do things I tell him that are good for him, even though they help him. He is very independent and stubborn.

Louisa: [00:18:13] So, when he brings me this piece, what I did was basically play it for him and say, "Look at what you have to do here and what you have to do here." Rather than telling him, you know, "Dude, this is way too difficult for you." He was like, "Oh wow. Oh, that's really cool. That sounds crazy." So, I tried to.... [Pause.] So, that relates to my personal philosophy in the sense of getting him to realize that this passage or this section in this piece is pretty demanding, and you need to figure out if you're not going to listen to me, you need to figure out on your own how you're going to achieve this.

Louisa: [00:19:07] So, in that sense, also my personal philosophy is really not so much about pushing students to their--you must put yourself in a box, in a sense. But using their skills, designing their own education in a way, you know what they want to do with the violin and why. And the more effort they take in their own education and not just sitting passively by letting me do everything and say, "Here, play this and play

that," the more successful they are because they actually start taking over. And then, I'm actually guiding them, but they think that they're doing it. [Laughs.]

TR: [00:20:05] Is that what you meant by "paying attention," then--that your students are taking ownership over their learning?

Louisa: [00:20:12] "Taking ownership" is a good word, yes. Yeah. And also then being creative about problem solving and technical passages. Other than me saying, you know, "Okay, practice with a metronome and then do rhythms." You know, I'm more to say, "How would you get past-- How would you best get through this this passage? What is your best strategy or what strategies, what tools do you have to get through this?" And then they basically think that they came up for it when I'm just trying to get them to think about it.

TR: [00:20:52] To what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Louisa: [00:20:58] Again, within the Suzuki books, not too much, but then that depends on the student a lot. One problem with.... Although, I love this--the graduation process--but one problem with it is that students can get into a rut when they're ready to go to the next book, but they just can't seem to keep their memory strong. With all four or five concertos in Book Four or whatever, they get a little bit like, "Ah man, this is just not fresh anymore." It's not motivating, and they just can't get through it. This just happened recently to a high school student. Actually, she's graduated now, and she wanted to play something totally different. And she was like, "Well, how about "Barcarolle," so. And she heard it from the movie.

Louisa: [00:22:04] So, when I'm moving outside of there and personalizing, individualizing pieces for students, it's highly based on their own taste and their own ambitions. A lot of students play in church, so they bring pieces from church that they want to learn. And so, it's not--when--it's mostly coming from them. But when it becomes, their current repertoire or whatever they're doing, it's being stale and it's not

being productive, I'll choose something that is either totally to their taste or in complete contrast to what they're being stale on. So, if it's Baroque and Vivaldi style, I'll go one for Romantic melody. If I play too much to that, we'll go back to a Vivaldi Concerto or a Bach piece, something like that. So, I really, my individual choices for the students are based on their taste and contrast.

TR: [00:23:22] And would you say that you diverge often from the Suzuki repertoire, or about what proportion of the printed musical material that your students are playing is Suzuki versus non-Suzuki?

Louisa: [00:23:38] I would say for each student, maybe once or twice a year. Not a whole lot because they have the motivation of getting through the book and getting their trophy. But, when they, when it, it's usually like.... Let's say twice a year for students who are in orchestra, because the first semester they'll have an etude or small piece--usually an etude--to get into the regional orchestra, which is a big deal for them. And that's usually a very difficult etude, like Fiorello or Dont. In middle school, the advanced Wohlfahrt etudes. So that's one, and then the Solo and Ensemble. And then, in some cases, almost every recital has two or three--We have two recitals per year in the Suzuki school. And so that'll be two or three pieces out of 30 students will be non-Suzuki.

TR: [00:24:57] Okay. So, you mentioned religious music a few minutes ago. Do you teach any other repertoire that you or others might consider non-traditional, and why or why not?

Louisa: [00:25:08] Yeah, that is also based on the students bringing stuff in. And I mostly don't do that because of time constraints and getting through the requirements of the graduation in my Suzuki Academy's case and then in the high school situation, all of their orchestra tests and stuff like that. But I do bring in a fair amount of fiddle tunes, and I do actually arrangements on my own. I have some private students that have asked me-- let's see what did he want to play? He wanted to play a song from The Greatest

Showman, and so I didn't really read it so much as I just took the melody line from the piano score and put it into Finale and kind of edited it a bit for his level too, so that he could play it with his sister. He also wanted to do the "Moonlight Sonata" by Beethoven with his mom. So, there is actually a version online for violin and piano. And again, I just put--actually was that? I just put that in Finale as well, because they only had a piano score with violin. So, that's mostly when the kids bring something to me and they're excited about it, I'm totally down for that. I taught at a fine arts camp for six years, I believe, and I fiddling there. Fiddling and jazz. And I have some jazz background in piano, so I'm a big fan of jazz.

Louisa: [00:27:10] But it's mostly... it's mostly that the reason I wouldn't just bring it up for kids to do and say, "Hey how about we do this jazz tune?" is mostly because of time constraints. And their other goals of graduating and their obligations for orchestra. The girl who does a lot of church music, she'll just tell me that the sheet music and I'll either transpose it away from F-Sharp or E-Major and get it into something that works better for her. Or if she's playing with band, we just deal with it.

Louisa: [00:27:59] They also every year do--everybody does Christmas carols, so. They all want to play Christmas carols. And recently, I did find this really awesome book of double stops, Christmas Carols and Double Stops [Christmas Melodies: Double Stop Solos and Duets for Violin] by Martha Yasuda, and so I give my advanced students those, because they were sick of their double stops, and it's like, "Hey, you can play this whole piece by yourself."

TR: [00:28:27] Why does everybody learn Christmas carols in your studio?

Louisa: [00:28:34] Because they want to.

TR: [00:28:36] Oh, okay.

TR: [00:28:37] Yeah. I mean I offer about September-October, because so many people have asked in the past. And so, around September-October, I try to wait 'til Halloween, but, you know, some of the pieces are a little more involved, so I kind of ask them, "Would you like to learn Christmas carols this Christmas?" And we kind of start around then. But it grew out of the demand. [Laughs.]

TR: [00:29:10] Okay. And then, could you speak to how you found out about this double stop book and then why in general you choose to teach new repertoire that you've never previously learned yourself?

Louisa: [00:29:30] Ummhmm. I actually--you know, I think I just saw this double stop book advertised on the back of a Suzuki book, on the back cover just this year, because I was looking for other duets, other versions, and so this double stop book is one page is a duet format and then the other page is the complete piece in double stop: the exact same notes that you would play in the duet form. And so, it works as an opportunity to play a duet with the kids but also then move on the more advanced level where you play those parts together. And then you asked about playing pieces I haven't played before?

TR: [00:30:32] Yeah. How often do you teach repertoire that you've never previously learned yourself? Why do you choose to teach this repertoire, and from where do you get the idea to teach it?

Louisa: [00:30:43] I do that relatively often, and it's mostly because I'm adding pieces. I've seen during my education in college and through my doctorate, you know, there are pieces that you kind of have to play, a certain standard core of pieces. And so you don't have a lot of time to explore outside of the given time constraint. But I teach a lot of--I've been ending up teaching a lot of pieces that I don't know, because they are required by the orchestra's solo contest, and then, you know, you don't know a piece until you know it. So, the Accolay is relatively new to me. I hadn't performed it myself. But I use that a lot as a--now--as a sort of entry level into the bigger pieces, because it's much

longer than any of Book Four, any of the Suzuki concertos except for the last two books.

Louisa: [00:31:47] I've learned the kind of middle range/level as well. And I tend, once I learn a new piece, I'll tend to give it to a lot of people, because as you know, I am refining my own teaching of the piece and getting to know it better, and it seems to work for a lot of different people. The "Sarabande," the Bohm "Sarabande" is one I'm using for like five people, so it's their solo this year. In different schools, you know around between the two different schools. But it helps me, and helps them, I think, for me to know it better. And so, we work through it together, if that helps.

Louisa: [00:32:41] So yeah. The teachers. I don't. I guess I wouldn't say that I actively go out and seek new pieces to try out on the students that I have never played. But once they start playing it and I start learning it, then I'm.... And actually, the Suzuki repertoire in general is--each new book is less familiar to me, the more advanced books. I studied through Book Four in my doctorate, and then now, this summer I'm going to do my formal Book Five training. And I have a student going into Book Seven though, coming up. So, those are pieces that I haven't actually gone over myself. So, that's a project that I am working towards now. So, again, each book that I get through and I get more and more advanced students in there, it's only one or two, you know, instead of 17 in Book One or Two. So, those pieces I know a lot better. But you're never going to grow as a teacher if you don't add new pieces in. Well, not never but, it's very helpful I find, and more exciting.

TR: [00:34:02] So, I'm going to skip forward a little bit, and--correct me if I'm wrong: The repertoire that you teach has changed over time. Can you speak really briefly why or why not?

Louisa: [00:34:15] Sorry, say that again? Repertoire I've...?

TR: [00:34:21] We're running a little bit low on time, so I'm going to skip forward a little bit. I'm just going to make the assumption that the repertoire that you teach has changed over time, from your previous answers. Why or why not? Just like a one-minute answer if you please.

Louisa: [00:34:38] Yeah. It has changed in the sense that it's grown and expanded.

TR: [00:34:48] How do you make your decision if you and the student do not agree on repertoire?

Louisa: [00:34:53] Ooo, that's a tough one, yeah.... [Pause.] If we don't agree....

Louisa: [00:35:02] You know, often I find myself giving in to their wishes. I don't know if that's a good thing. But usually if it ends up that I was right, and the piece is too difficult, they've learned a lesson in that sense. And I don't ever not agree because I don't like the piece. I usually try to give it a chance. So that's usually what happens. They usually win, but if it is something where I'm really, really adamant about this, like, "You can't play Tchaikovsky, you just started playing." So, then I'll win. But, within reason.

TR: [00:35:47] Okay. And then just more generally, how do you think about matching the difficulty of the repertoire to your students' skill level?

Louisa: [00:35:57] I think it's really important. Just, again, coming from my own past where I didn't have good guidance. I'm really trying to think about that and err on the side of easy pieces, easier pieces, and pieces that they are able to do successfully and take pride in. I just, I don't like to see students struggling to play something and it making their lives miserable that way. And through that overall general policy, when they do bring in something that's more difficult, they can look at it more as a challenge rather than, "This is just my life. I'm just living in constant struggle." So, I'm a pretty

firm believer in bringing them back down from their ambitions in terms of doing something reasonable for their ability.

TR: [00:37:12] What resources do you use or access when selecting repertoire?

Louisa: [00:37:17] I use collections. The Barbara Barber books. I also ask a lot of people. I ask my colleagues. You know, "This student level, what would you think about them starting the Mozart concerto?" I do a lot of that. I'll reach out to other colleagues.

Louisa: [00:37:37] I have a viola student, who I'm not terribly confident about teaching at the high school. I just reach out to my violist pals and say, you know, "What would you recommend for this student?" And then I feel relatively comfortable... I think I'm going to move him on at the end of this year to someone that's more viola-centered.

Louisa: [00:38:05] There are also a lot of online resources. There is a Suzuki for, like a newsletter not a newsletter but sort of a discussion-news thread, I guess. And then there's a Facebook group that I'll access sometimes and ask about.... I see a lot of people doing that: saying, "I use this, and this, and this, and I had that struggle. Give them this piece before that, if not, what else?" I think people are the best resources. And then the UIL list is helpful just to sort of see what the state of Texas says, "This is super difficult" or whatever [pause] if I'm in an unfamiliar territory.

TR: [00:39:00] And do you keep a repertoire list? Are there any pieces that you always teach or never teach or used to teach but don't anymore based on the students' skill, age, or other factors?

Louisa: [00:39:11] I made a repertoire list for my comps in my doctorate, but it is mostly for college level, so I haven't really accessed that list much in the past five years, because I haven't needed it. The list that I use is mostly in my head in terms of branching outside of the Suzuki repertoire. So, I will teach pieces like Accolay a lot.

The Seitz Pupil's concerto as jumping-off points. Barbara Barber books I use a lot as separate from, branching out from Suzuki. I teach “Meditation” from Thais a lot, partly because it's one of the easier pieces in the level one prescribed music list for Texas.

Louisa: [00:40:17] I'm not sure there are any pieces I don't teach, like I refuse to teach. I like to also bring in pieces that are for more than one violin, like Vivaldi multiple violin concertos, so that they get more collaboration. I arranged "Under the Sea" for four violins, which I like to bring out sometimes for fun. When I was doing that group teaching in New Orleans, I did a lot of arranging folk songs and let's see.... I think.... There was a white... song-- I can't remember. A popular song, that everybody was like, "I gotta, I gotta play this now." So, we made an arrangement of it.

TR: [00:41:28] Is there anything that you want to add about repertoire that you feel wasn't addressed by the questions?

Louisa: [00:41:43] I don't think so. I think you're asking really good questions.

Louisa: [00:41:46] And I think it's.... I am happy to send you the list that I made. I'll see if it's a little bit more straightforward than I thought. And again, you know, you might be looking for more college level, and I'm more in the beginner area. But I think it is-- I think it is important to be open-minded to repertoire because we can get stuck in a little bubble.

Louisa: [00:42:20] And one thing I did forget to mention was there is this Royal Conservatory exam that happens. I can send you again in your email a link to that. They have books. You can kind of take an exam at each level. And I've become familiar with that through some students who brought it in. So, I think it's really nice to have a little fresh air and branching out and not being too close-minded about what you're willing to teach or whatever. Because I think it's more fun that way.

TR: [00:43:07] Okay, so that's the end of the interview. Thank you so much for being interviewed.

Melanie.2019-01-29

TR: [00:01:49] Okay, so, well, I read the consent script last time, and you have it in writing. But just to be safe, do you consent to this interview?

Melanie: [00:01:58] Yes.

TR: [00:02:00] Okay, so how many years have you taught in a studio setting?

Melanie: [00:02:07] I'm thinking 28 years as a major part of the profession. So, that's not including high school or college.

TR: [00:02:20] And how many students do you typically have at one time in your studio?

Melanie: [00:02:24] About 20.

TR: [00:02:27] What is the fewest and greatest number of students you have taught at one time?

Melanie: [00:02:33] I'm thinking fewest:10; greatest: 30.

TR: [00:02:40] And please describe briefly the range of ability and ages of your students.

Melanie: [00:02:45] So, I have 10 college students and 10 pre-college students now, and it's usually about that. So, I have a wide range of ages and abilities.

Melanie: [00:03:01] My college students are music majors and are doing collegiate level repertoire. I've also worked with amateur, like semi-amateur professionals, who are professors in other areas. So, I've taught older students in their 50s or 60s and then my pre-college kids are mostly middle school-high school, but I usually have a couple of younger students, like ages four to six. I might have just a couple of youngers as well. So--and those kids are usually going through Suzuki repertoire. So, from early beginning, I usually try to have a couple of those young kids. And I have the high school, and then my batch of undergrads, maybe a grad student tossed in there, but mostly undergrad. And then maybe semi-professional adults. So, it's a pretty wide range of ages and abilities.

TR: [00:04:15] And by early beginner, do you mean that that's where they are now or that you started them on violin and then...?

Melanie: [00:04:27] Well, let's see. Right now, I don't have anyone who I started. Yeah. Quite often, I mean, I have had before, but I usually like to try to do that but they-- There's a Suzuki program here that starts all the kids together as part of the university program, and so it's more likely that you might get one of those kids who started in the university program.

TR: [00:04:56] I see, okay.

TR: [00:04:59] Please briefly describe how your musical background has informed the way that you teach. This can include significant teachers, classes taken at an educational institution, professional development activities, or other personal or professional experiences.

Melanie: [00:05:14] Okay. Well, that's a loaded question. So, my early instruction was with one of the first Suzuki programs in the United States in the 1970s--late 70s. And so, I was older in that program, older meaning age nine, in an otherwise small, younger classes of kids--maybe five-year-olds. And so, I had a step-by-step, very graded

repertoire approach where technique was taught through the pieces. And I had private and group instruction, although I wasn't with a like-age group, and so I moved quickly through that repertoire.

Melanie: [00:06:18] My second teacher was a violinist in the Utah Symphony, and he was a really different kind of teacher in terms of looser organization, but the main idea was musicianship and gesture and communication. And I worked with him through most of high school and then with the teacher at the university at the end of my high school experience to prepare them for auditions.

Melanie: [00:06:52] So, I had during that span of time some very different approaches to teaching. And then I also went to summer programs pre-college--so, Interlochen, Tanglewood, Music Academy of the West--and I had very different approaches there that I felt like all of my teachers were extremely influential and they all contributed to the whole of my experience in terms of what I had to offer.

Melanie: [00:07:33] Once I got to university, I went to Eastman School of Music, and I had a number of different experiences there working with various teachers, because I was in a chamber music program working with Don Wallerstein, and then he left to teach at Cleveland. I worked with Bill Preucil. My primary solo teacher was Charlie Castleman. I worked for a year with Zvi Zeitlin, and I also worked for a year with Catherine Tait. And Zvi Zeitlin was an extremely strict and stringent teacher, and he did mostly demonstration. Catherine Tait was very methodical and did much less demonstration. Don Wallerstein was completely ethereal and used all these creative references to tone production. So, I feel that my background had a rich diversity, and I think that was very influential in my approach, because I feel like I have a large bag of tricks to draw from in terms of how to approach each student.

Melanie: [00:08:59] So, that was my own personal experience for my playing, and then I did quite a bit of studies--pedagogical study--with different teachers: John Kendall, Bill Starr, Susan Kempter, Louise Scott. These were some of my primary influences in

terms of pedagogical study. And so, that affected my comfort level in teaching beginners, because I think the more advanced player you are, the further it seems your experience is from, for setting up a student. And, so, after going through my pedagogy training, I developed a level of comfort for doing that, and so that has given me the ability to have this sort of wide span of ages and abilities that I currently have today. And I like it that way. I enjoy having that diversity in the studio.

TR: [00:10:19] Absolutely. What are the factors that are most important to you when choosing repertoire for or with an individual?

Melanie: [00:10:34] So, I would say the student's technique level is extremely important. The context of the piece selection in terms of other repertoire. So, what was studied before? What do you have in mind for the student afterwards? And so, it has to do with context involving skills taught and skills to be learned, as well as pacing.

Melanie: [00:11:13] So, for instance, if a student has just worked on a piece that was longer or more involved and more complex, then maybe there would be a piece that's a little bit lighter at that point. So, context is very important. The student's technique level is probably the number one.

Melanie: [00:11:34] The student motivation and interest is always a consideration. If a student really wants to play this piece, it goes on the list. Maybe it doesn't happen right now, but it goes on the list. Inversely, if the student really dislikes a piece, then that might be something we don't do, or we simply touch upon a technique or you find a different piece for learning that similar skill. So, that's important.

Melanie: [00:12:06] And then musical maturity. You know, just because a student wants to play the Brahms Concerto does not mean that goes [laughs] in the mix, you know. So, I would say those are the five factors: technique level, context of other repertoire, the student's motivation, student's maturity level. Was that five? Oh, and then I think I may have skipped one. You know, the challenge of the piece versus the ability

to master. And it sort of ties into technique level. So, I'm always trying to choose something challenging that has the right ability of playability in there.

TR: [00:13:08] You answered my follow-up, so. Do you have a teaching philosophy? And if so, describe it as it relates to the repertoire that you choose.

Melanie: [00:13:21] Well, let's see. [Pause.] This was tough. I don't know that I have a specific written philosophy, any kind of written philosophy that I've articulated, but I would say that I believe a student at any age and any level can be taught to play with the highest standards of intonation, tone, and musicianship. So, whether it's a beginner playing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," they can play that musically, in tune, and with good posture and skill. I don't believe that we withhold standards for a certain ability level. So, if I were to sort of boil it down to one idea--a teaching philosophy--that would be definitely a primary teaching philosophy idea. And so, the repertoire that you choose is crucial to the success of that. Because I think you have to choose something that is within the student range of ability to master and to play well, so that with good musicianship, beautiful tone, and beautiful intonation are possible.

Melanie: [00:14:54] And I think this is one of the pitfalls of maybe early teachers or this kind of thing is choosing--and we see it with people auditioning for the university: choosing repertoire that is not within that scope. And then I think that that had the opposite effect of you know, building confidence and motivation and certainly aptitude in playing the instrument.

TR: [00:15:26] Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So, to what extent do you personalize repertoire for each student?

Melanie: [00:15:34] Well, I feel like every student has an individual path. There is repertoire that is going to overlap. And with a young student, I do follow more of a graded repertoire, by and large that Suzuki laid out.

Melanie: [00:16:00] But you know, one reason it took so long to publish that--was it '76 or '77 when the ASTA team had visited Matsumoto and seeing what happened what was going on there. One reason it took so long, and John Kendall actually published many of these pieces initially, was that Suzuki himself did not use the same graded repertoire. It was more customized for each student. So, my approach, well it's not dogmatic in any way, shape, or form. I sort of loosely follow that, because it's compiled in such a way that that skill levels are introduced step-by-step. And then there's a lot of brilliance to that. And I think if your student is involved in a larger organization, then they need to have some continuity.

Melanie: [00:17:04] So, I guess what I'm saying is it may be less of an individual, of a diverse individual path when I'm working with younger students within a Suzuki program, so that they're able to then go participate in summer camps and this kind of thing and be sort of online with what everybody else is doing. Although, I will occasionally skip or do a different order or you know, this kind of thing, depending on the student.

Melanie: [00:17:30] With university students, there's going to be greater diversity, but there's going to be some overlap, because there are certain things that I will include. You know, I will include Baroque pieces. I will include Classical style pieces. I try to create diversity within the studio, so that not everyone is playing the same solo Bach or not everyone is playing the same Mozart Concerto, for instance. You know, this kind of thing. [Pause.] But I would say that I definitely personalize the repertoire.

TR: [00:18:09] And, circling back a moment: so, generally all of your younger students do play all of the Suzuki pieces? Is that what you meant by keeping continuity?

Melanie: [00:18:26] I would say most of them play most of the pieces.

TR: [00:18:32] Okay. Thank you.

Melanie: [00:18:33] Up through Volume Six, and then I'm much more likely to pull out other repertoire and skip and choose at that point.

TR: [00:18:46] Is there a reason that you chose Volume Six as a place to branch out into other repertoire?

Melanie: [00:18:53] Well, I mean I do include some other pieces depending on the student. Before that, I mean there is a whole track of note reading. I supplement earlier than that, but in terms of diverging from, like not including a Suzuki... where a student is much more likely to be on a piece that is not in the Suzuki repertoire at that point. Because, at that point, I think Volume Six to Eight, you can you can sort of mix and match in terms of difficulty. I think the most difficult piece in the repertoire is the Bach Concerto, in the middle of Volume Seven. And so, most of my students will play that Bach concerto, but they don't necessarily for instance need to then play all of Book Eight. Beyond that, I may have them play the Eccles Sonata at some point, or you know, I am much more likely to include other pieces also because now the technique has arrived at a place where they're able to play Czardas or the Mlynarski "Mazurka" or "Polish Dance" or some of this other sort of intermediate level repertoire.

TR: [00:20:14] And can you talk a little bit about how you think about supplementing the Suzuki repertoire or like what your process is for using supplementary repertoire?

Melanie: [00:20:29] Well, I think it's based on--for me--on what the student needs to reinforce in their technique. Or and you're talking about repertoire, not necessarily scales and etudes, correct?

TR: [00:20:52] No, I'm including repertoire meaning anything printed.

Melanie: [00:20:58] Okay, so and ask the question one more time? Sorry.

TR: [00:21:03] How do you think about choosing supplementary repertoire? In this case, I guess, anything that's non-Suzuki for your younger students.

Melanie: [00:21:12] How do I think that choosing that? Well, I mean currently my students are involved in a larger program, so they're going to be using the note-reading materials that the program is using so that they have that continuity. Which currently with the younger students, they go through the Joanne Martin I Can Read Music books, and then they go into this little prelude orchestra, and they have basically music handed out, sheet music handed out. And then they go into the next level orchestra. And so we're essentially working on the note reading that is provided by the group, but usually we start with-- The kids take a Music Mind Games class, several classes, and then I have them in the I Can Read Music books. It has these large bubble notes for these younger students.

Melanie: [00:22:04] I've worked with a couple of the graduate conducting students as older beginning players, and I'm not going to put them on I Can Read Music. Necessarily you don't need the Ševčík bubbled notes, and they're going to be... and I might use something more like early Ševčík or something for them, because they must be very proficient pianists for instance. So, it sort of depends on the student. But I like to bring in scales early on, and I usually teach those by rote initially, because I want to the focus to be on intonation, tone, and posture.

Melanie: [00:22:53] And then, I'll tell you something: Lately, the last few years I've been using that Barbara Barber Scales for Advanced Violinists if the students are in Book Four level, and so they're doing three-octave scales at that point. And then I might supplement with some Mazas etudes, or I like the Preparation [Preparing] for Kreutzer book. It has some Dancla and Wohlfahrt and different etudes presented in there.

Melanie: [00:23:35] And then, by the time the kids are sort of nearing the end of a book compilation, then I'm bringing in Kreutzer etudes into the advanced group class. And that kind of thing. And I also would like to reinforce note reading in upper positions by

having the students write on the staff and compose in the ledger lines, because I don't think there is enough of that. That's where everybody gets lost.

TR: [00:24:06] Yeah. I'm glad you brought that up. I haven't heard any of the other interviewees mentioned anything like that.

Melanie: [00:24:14] You know, I actually like to use for building skill there. I like to use some familiar, easy pieces like, "Twinkle," "Lightly Row," "Perpetual Motion," things that are within, you know, that are ingrained. And I just put the hand up in seventh position. We find that harmonic going straight across, and we just start playing pieces up there, so that they're... the first thing to be developed is tone, intonation, good posture. Then we start reading notes up there. So, I still like to focus on the primary, the biggies, the primary goals that I want to see.

Melanie: [00:25:03] I want the student to be able to exceed in their playing, and then when you attach that familiarity to learning what the notes are called and what they look like on the staff, then it starts to make sense. I think when you just get kids up there reading and they don't have any familiarity with the physical, you know, change in hand shape and hand organization and distances. And if they think then, it's no wonder they're lost. [Laughs.]

TR: [00:25:36] Right, right. Okay, so back to the interview schedule. Describe, as applicable, the constraints or pressures that affect your repertoire choice.

Melanie: [00:25:47] The constraints or pressures...okay, well.... Let's see. I think, sometimes, like with the university students, the requirements of what they need to complete for the degree don't always align with what I would ideally choose for them. For instance, our students have what's called a barrier jury, an upper-division jury you have to pass at the end of sophomore year in order to become an upperclassman and keep their major. And they have certain requirements--repertoire requirements--for that jury. And I may not feel like a student is ready for solo Bach, and so then, I'm going to

give them maybe one of the Telemann Fantasies or something in preparation, and they get special permission that this student is going to play a Telemann Fantasy instead of a solo Bach. So, I feel like there's a little bit of pressure there sometimes.

Melanie: [00:26:50] Sometimes with pre-college kids, the requirements for what students are able to play, for instance on All-State audition can feel like a constraint, because there's a specific list of I don't know 25 works that they can use for that. And it includes the Sibelius Concerto, the Brahms Concerto, the Tchaikovsky Concerto. [Unclear.] It's sort of a ridiculous list and doesn't include some of the meat and potatoes, you know, early collegiate repertoire that I would might otherwise choose for that. So, that can be a constraint. So, requirements for an audition, requirements for a degree. Those were the were the primary things that came to my mind.

Melanie: [00:27:50] Oh, the other thing was that can be a constraint is a student's lack of time to practice. For instance, they're involved in a big project like a school play or whatever, and I would like to have them be able to learn this piece next, but I know they're not going to have the time or we're coming into the summer, and I know they're doing something else. And so, then I'm adapting to what can be successful for them given their time constraints.

TR: [00:28:19] And just a clarifying question: So is the list for Arizona? Does that stay the same from year to year? Just 25 pieces?

Melanie: [00:28:31] It has been petitioned and occasionally something is dropped or added. I think recently like the Khachaturian Concerto was added. But the Kabalevsky is still not on there.

TR: [00:28:54] So, it's relatively static.

Melanie: [00:28:56] Yeah, it's a big process to introduce the idea. The change has to go to committees, and it's a big--it's just a slow. It's like a legal process or something, you

know. [Laughs.] So, yeah it generally remains the same unless something is introduced. And then, you know, it goes one change by change. I've seen like it.... It changes like molasses. You know, I've seen like one or two changes over the last decade, basically.

TR: [00:29:30] And has the repertoire that you teach changed over time? And why or why not?

Melanie: [00:29:36] I think the repertoire that I've taught has expanded as my knowledge of the repertoire has expanded. So, the possibilities of what I might give a student is in a much larger range than when I was beginning teacher, for instance. So, I think that's really the main reason: I've played more repertoire. My students have played more repertoire. And so, I feel like that keeps growing for the better.

Melanie: [00:30:14] I do also feel like I used to have a few pieces that I felt were sort of like mandatory rites of passage. Like, I felt.... I mean, earlier in my playing, once a student got to a certain point, I wanted them to play Mozart G Major. I wanted them to play that before the D Major or the A Major, because I thought, "This is what they should play first."

Melanie: [00:30:44] Well, that's a very long piece, you know. And I think now having had student stumble through that and having some students read through and it's fine. Other students, it's been a real arduous task, and I at some point gave up the idea that well, every student this must be a rite of passage. It was sort of a ridiculous idea. And it's not that I had come to that concrete thought. It's just that we always sort of arrived at Mozart [unclear]. But, I felt like once I started identifying certain strengths and weaknesses in a student and becoming familiar with other classical works, like "Oh! How about Haydn in G Major? That's only four pages instead of eight pages." Then, that became like a successful alternative. So, I think what my students play is a little bit more diverse than it used to be, just because my knowledge of the repertoire is wider.

TR: [00:31:56] And so how often do you teach repertoire that you have never previously learned yourself?

Melanie: [00:32:02] I would say every year I have something that I am teaching that I haven't played. Sometimes more than one thing. Most of what I teach I have played. The instances where I'm going to be teaching something that I am not familiar with are like, for instance, a grad student who wants to put on a recital a contemporary piece that it's either newer or I, you know.... I have a student now who is doing a work by Steve Reich that has pedal. Never played it before. I had a graduate student who came back from a summer camp.

Melanie: [00:32:47] This is another one. They do a summer camp. They come back to me partially learned something. Like the Berg Violin Concerto. Well, I've never played the Berg Violin Concerto, but here we went, you know, headlong into learning the Berg Violin Concerto. I feel like it it's positive to bring in repertoire and expand what you know. So, most of what I teach I have played or taught repeatedly, but there's always a piece or two that is new for me somewhere in my studio each year, I would say.

TR: [00:33:23] So, you already mentioned students bringing you pieces that they want to play. Are there other places where you get the idea to expand the repertoire that you teach that you've never previously learned? And then, just more generally, what resources do use or access when selecting repertoire?

Melanie: [00:33:46] Well, like I mentioned, you know, if the students very interested and comes in or if the student has gone to summer camp with a suggestion from somewhere else, then we might follow that path.

Melanie: [00:34:01] Also, it might be something that they've heard or that I've heard. I go to concerts. I'm listening to music. Or there's a CD or something on the radio. You know, "Oh, that's a beautiful sonata by Nadia Boulanger or Jennifer Higdon" or

something like that, and I'm bringing it in because I've heard it. So, I think listening is a resource.

Melanie: [00:34:30] I also think discussing repertoire with other teachers is going to be a resource. For instance, probably 10 years ago, I worked with Mark [unclear]-- worked like I went to a couple of masterclasses that he taught. He teaches in the Minneapolis area, taught for many, many years at MacPhail School. Anyway, he had these wonderful cadenzas for Mozart concertos that were out of print at the time by Franz Beyer and a lot of people didn't teach--I mean, don't teach some of these Mozart concertos because the cadenzas are so difficult: the Joachim cadenzas, these Franz Beyer cadenzas are much better paired for the same ability level as the body of the piece. So, that's an instance where from another teacher I got an idea of something that I brought in.

Melanie: [00:35:27] And you know, I'm involved in professional organizations like ASTA or FAA, where there might be conversations with other teachers. So, that's a resource for me.

Melanie: [00:35:41] Speaking of ASTA, there's a great resource for repertoire in the ASTACAP repertoire list. So, Certificate Advancement Program that ASTA does. They have a repertoire list that is extremely extensive for what they sort of identify as 10 levels of repertoire. And it's not just pieces, it's also supplemental scale books. And so that's a really fantastic resource.

Melanie: [00:36:14] And then sometimes I'll just research. "Okay, what else could I put on this recital that would be a good alternative?" And that's more when I'm trying to include something contemporary. I feel like that that that's where my knowledge is like least fleshed-out is the contemporary stuff, because we don't know what's going to survive 100 years from now. We're looking for those great works that we think will. But yeah, I will definitely add things to the repertoire list based on concerts, like hearing Steven Moeckel, the concertmaster of the Phoenix Symphony, play the Korngold

Concerto a few years back. It's like, "Oh, okay that's something that we might want to include with some of the college students." And it's getting played more and more. So, yes. Concerts, discussions with other teachers, some of the materials that ASTA has compiled through ASTACAP, and then just general research.

TR: [00:37:22] Okay, so moving forward: Do you teach any repertoire that you or others might consider non-traditional, and why or why not?

Melanie: [00:37:34] Well, I guess it depends how you define non-traditional. I do try to teach.... I try to include it with the high school students and then I'm trying to include some 20th-century or more contemporary repertoire. Certainly with the college students I try to include that somewhere along the way and maybe a little bit avant garde, like with pedal or something sort of obscure and not tonal, because that's the real world of you know: if you're a musician out there, you're not going to just be playing Baroque, Classical, and Romantic music, right?

Melanie: [00:38:21] But I don't really focus on what ASTA calls "alternative styles," just because I don't really have interest or ability in that area. So, I take everything I do is--sort of has that classical base. And you know, it's not that I don't encourage--You know if there's like an Irish fiddle camp, and someone wants to do it: great. Or when Julie Lyonn Lieberman came and did a workshop on improvisation, there were a couple of students who I sent to that, because I thought they had an interest in that. I just have never done any kind of training in that, so I don't really include that in my own teaching.

TR: [00:39:06] Do you keep a repertoire list?

Melanie: [00:39:13] I don't really keep it. It's all in my brain. [Laughs.] I don't really keep a repertoire list. I mean there are certain pieces that I'm more likely to use than others.

Melanie: [00:39:28] As I mentioned before, for younger students, I use a lot of the pieces in the Suzuki repertoire. I use a lot of the pieces that have been compiled in the Barbara Barber Solos for Young Violinists, you know, as intermediate repertoire--which was such a great service, because we used to have to always get like individual sheet music for various things. And then it's all compiled and so affordable for students.

Melanie: [00:39:55] With a college student or the advanced high school students, they're likely to.... You're going to play something Classical, whether it's a Mozart concerto or Haydn concerto. They're going to do maybe a Telemann Fantasy on their way to solo Bach. Everyone who studies with me in colleges does solo Bach. And then they have sort of a progression of different Romantic concertos, but it's not set in stone. Not everybody plays Baroque. Not everybody plays Mendelssohn. Not everybody plays Lalo, but between the studio there's usually somebody playing one of those three pieces. I may have a student do Saint Saens or Wieniawksy Number Two. Those are sort of common pieces. I like some of the 20th-century Russian composers like Kabalevsky or Prokofiev G Minor, which is the Concerto Number Two. So, there are certain pieces that I maybe favor, because I've taught a lot. I've taught the Tchaikovsky Concerto several times now, and I like to sort of work up to that and build skills for that.

Melanie: [00:41:11] So, I think that a lot of the repertoire that we do is sort of building skills and pathways through certain repertoire. But you know, it's not uncommon to have a student who really doesn't want to play what they're hearing a lot of. Like, "I really don't want to play Bruch G Minor Concerto, because I've heard that a lot over the years." "Okay, well, let's do Scottish Fantasy," which is another great concerto by Bruch and has a lot of skills in there. I might use something else that has tritone chords, and we don't have to build that skill through Bruch G Minor, first movement, for instance.

Melanie: [00:41:53] So, I don't have a set list, but there are certain composers that I just mentioned too. I guess I tend to favor some of those warhorses. I think if people are going out and teaching them--most of my students want to do a combination of teaching

and playing--then they need that sort of solid background in and the pieces that are often played. Barber Concerto is another one that I teach a lot. So.

TR: [00:42:24] So, would you say that you keep it in the back of your mind that the pieces that you're teaching students, they will later go on to have those pieces as a resource when they teach?

Melanie: [00:42:36] Sorry, I keep in the back of my mind what they might do when they're teaching?

TR: [00:42:42] Yeah, that they might be using the pieces that you are teaching them in their own teaching.

Melanie: [00:42:47] Yes. I do. And you know, if I'm working with a student, and we are bypassing a lot of the more standard repertoire for their own recitals or performance, then I might have them like play through and sort of get some fingerings and work through some of the standard, more conventional concertos in the summertime. Not necessarily for their own performance, but just for their own resources and repertoire, so they have they have some familiarity with that.

Melanie: [00:43:28] Most students when they've gone through [public university in the Southwest], then they've fingered, and been familiar with, and performed at least one Mozart concerto and maybe have familiarity with at least two of them, you know for instance. And with some of the main standby Romantic concertos as well. So, yes, I am thinking about what they.... I'm trying to expand their knowledge beyond what they have performed and will perform, because oftentimes we're spending the majority of a school year on the same concerto, and they need a wider repertoire span than that. At least, I'd like them to have a wider span than that for their teaching purposes.

TR: [00:44:18] Okay. Thank you very much. That's basically end of the interview. I just have one last question for you. Is there anything else that you want to add about repertoire that you feel wasn't addressed in the questions? [Pause.] This is optional.

Melanie: [00:44:39] Oh okay. You know, I don't think I have anything specific to add. I think all the brain cells are depleted now. [Laughs.] Yeah, I didn't think of anything specific.

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