

How to Be a Better Practicer in 2022? Try These Top Tips and Insights From 2021.

Description

Happy New Year!

Yep...it's once again that time of year when we are supposed to think about New Years resolutions and what habits we'd like to change. But with everything we've experienced the last couple years, I don't know if I have the same level of energy as in years past, to make any massive behavior change commitments for the year ahead. ?

So rather than resolving through sheer force of will to commit to something big, challenging, or difficult, I'm thinking that a better bet might be to aim smaller. To seek out the *tiniest* new habits or techniques or strategies that "spark joy" or some smidgen of curiosity when I think of taking them for a spin.

A year in review (and excuse to procrastinate)

To that end, I thought it might be fun to do a review of some of the things we learned from the performers, educators, and researchers who took time out of their schedules in the last year to chat. And who shared some pretty intriguing, useful, and inspiring ideas that could be integrated into our daily practice, performing, or teaching.

So if you're not feeling quite as motivated to practice as you would have hoped to be at this point in the early days of the new year, a) just know that you're not alone, and b) I think you can probably make a reasonable case for procrastinating productively for at least a couple more hours if it involves listening to this year-in-review episode. ?

After all, wasn't it Abraham Lincoln who said "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."?

Then again, it appears that Lincoln also once said this...

Highlights from 2021's episodes

In any case, the episode you'll find below is a collection of a few of my favorite bits from 2021's episodes. And in case you don't have an hour to listen to the whole thing, I've put together some shortcuts to each guest's segments too.

Shortcuts

In case you'd like to skip around, here are shortcuts to the different segments with each guest:

- 1:21 – Cellist **Astrid Schween** shares a few details about her daily warmup strategy, and how she gets her mind and body ready to practice in the most effective way each day.
- 3:55 – Danish trumpet player **Kristian Steenstrup** shared an intriguing 4-step process for learning new music in the most efficient and effective way.
- 8:11 – Wanting to be a more effective practicer in 2022, but not sure how? Consider what bassoonist **Daniel Matsukawa** had to say about the three components of being a better practicer.
- 14:17 – Have a nagging feeling that you probably ought to do more score study, but feel some internal resistance? Pianist **Vivian Hornik Weilerstein** shares some insights on how to make this a more enjoyable experience.
- 21:31 – While we're talking about score study, here's cellist **Merry Peckham** on some specifics to look for when doing score study in advance of a rehearsal, and how this can help you be a better and more engaged music-making partner.
- 28:08 – Cellist **Natasha Brofsky** and violist **Roger Tapping** explain how a deeper understanding of what other parts are doing can also help you better manage nerves and performance pressure too!
- 32:28 – If you're the parent of a younger musician, your questions may be more along the lines of motivation than score study. The bad news is that there's probably no one single best way to be a parent to a musical youngster, but the good news is that there's probably no single correct way either, as we learned in an episode with violinist **Timothy Kantor**, and his parents violinist **Paul Kantor** and pianist **Virginia Weckstrom**.
- 38:10 – And whether you're a parent or a teacher, finding ways to provide helpful and instructive feedback while minimizing judgment and negative emotions is much easier said than done. But it turns out that there may be a lot we can learn from the world of animal training, believe it or not. Specifically, from a technique known as "clicker training" that has begun to be used in training surgeons, as well as athletes and performing artists. Dancer and choreographer **Ann Bergeron** shares more details on what this might look like.
- 43:48 – Nowadays, I think most musicians are pretty aware of the importance of focusing on our physical well-being – at least when it comes to the parts of our body that we move to play our instruments. But trumpet player and musician health researcher **Kris Chesky** reminds us that our ears and hearing are an often-overlooked occupational risk that we probably ought to be much more mindful of. And that the most effective way to do so may be totally aligned with the most musically effective way to practice and rehearse as well (wait, what does that mean...?).
- 52:06 – The news over the last couple weeks on the latest covid variant is concerning, and I think we're all hoping to avoid returning to online only Zoom classes, but in case we do have to do some degree of Zoom learning in the months ahead, it might be helpful to remember some of the tips on avoiding Zoom fatigue that Alexander Technique educator **Lori Schiff** shared with us.

Links to full episodes

And if you'd like to do a deeper dive into any of these areas, here are links to the full episodes of each guest:

- [**Astrid Schween**: On Cultivating Routines, Curiosity, and 800 Different Spiccatos](#)
- [**Kristian Steenstrup**: On Singing, Solfège, and Cultivating a More Efficient Approach to Learning New Music.](#)
- [**Daniel Matsukawa**: On Cultivating a Great Sound, and Three Components of Becoming a Better Practicer](#)
- [**Vivian Hornik Weilerstein**: On Listening, Leading, and Learning How to Be More in Sync With Your Music-Making Partners.](#)
- [**Merry Peckham**: On Rehearsing, Performing, and Growing as a Musician \(And Person!\) in Chamber Music](#)
- [**Natasha Brofsky & Roger Tapping**: On Learning New Repertoire and Getting to Know a Composer's Unique Language](#)
- [**The Kantor Family**: On Being Effective Music Parents to Musical Children](#)
- [**Ann Bergeron**: On Facilitating a More Positive Learning Experience, More Effective Skill Acquisition, and More Creative Artists.](#)
- [**Kris Chesky**: On Hearing Health, Earplugs, and How the Best Strategy for Protecting Young Musicians' Ears Might Help Them Become Better Musicians Too](#)
- [**Lori Schiff**: On Adapting to Remote Instruction, and Learning to Teach Alexander Technique Online](#)

Date Created

January 2022