

## The Kantor Family: On Being Effective Music Parents to Musical Children

### Description

I imagine there are probably some kids out there who love to practice, but I was definitely not one of them when I was growing up.

There was a lot of nagging on my mom's side, a lot of passive aggressive behavior on my part, and days when I thought running away might be a good idea (once, my mom packed me a lunch, I wandered off into the woods to see if I could make a home for myself there, and eventually got thirsty/bored/had to go to the bathroom, and returned home with, if memory serves correctly, a poison ivy rash).

It all worked out in the end, but I had some friends growing up whose relationship with music and parents were much more contentious. And in some cases eventually led to burnout, or restraining orders (allegedly, at least), and pretty complicated relationships with both family and music.

### Yikes, this is tough!

So when my wife (a pianist) and I had kids of our own, we were a little conflicted. We felt like it would be weird not to share music with our kids in some way. But we also weren't sure how exactly to navigate that path. Because we wanted them to have a good relationship both with music and with us.

But if they were going to do this, shouldn't we also help them try to do it well? And become good at it? Even if we have no intention of them pursuing a career in music?

The challenge of course, is that *playing* can be fun, but *practicing* is often much, much harder. And not necessarily the funnest thing in the world.

### Umm...where's the line?

So how much pushing do we need to do as parents? Where's the line between pushing just enough, and too much?

Like, what if they want to quit? How do we know they won't regret it later if we let them? But what if we make them continue, and it changes how they feel about music, and negatively affects our relationship with them as well?

And how do we navigate this as parents who have some degree of experience or expertise in this particular area? And could really help them avoid a lot of the mistakes we made when we were at their stage of learning? Without making them feel judged or evaluated or criticized all the time?

Argh! So many questions!

## What have others done?

If I've learned nothing else from being a parent, I've learned that there's no one-size-fits all answer to parenting. But still, I was curious how professional musicians approach being a music parent to their kids.

So I thought I'd reach out to a former teacher of mine, to see how he and his wife (also a musician) navigated this path with their own kids. One of whom decided to enter the music world professionally himself.

I didn't expect them to give me all the answers, of course. Or share a single "secret formula" for raising happy and successful kids who pursue careers in music. But I did hope that this would provide a glimpse of the experience that at least one family had in navigating this unique time in both a child and parent's life.

## Meet the Kantor family

Violinist Paul Kantor, pianist Virginia Weckstrom, and violinist Timothy Kantor have all enjoyed active performance and teaching careers.

[Paul](#), is the Sally Shepherd Perkins Professor of Violin at Rice University and Artist in Residence at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, and has previously been on the faculty at the Cleveland Institute of Music, University of Michigan, Julliard, Yale, and New England Conservatory.

[Virginia](#) is also on the faculty at Rice University, as well as at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto, and at the Aspen Music Festival. She was pianist/harpsichordist with the New Haven Symphony for ten years, and in addition, has been committed to fostering community arts education, co-founding the School for the Performing Arts, in Ann Arbor, MI.

[Timothy](#) is a member of the Afiara Quartet, and serves on the faculty of the University of Arizona, and at the Kinhaven Music School in Vermont.

In this episode, we'll explore...

- How Paul and Virginia responded when Tim declared in middle school that he hated the violin, wanted to burn it, and was not going to play. (5:15)
- What changed that made Tim begin to appreciate the violin a bit more. (7:44)
- The story of how Tim got started with the violin. (8:27)

- How hands-on or hands-off were Paul and Virginia in their kids' music lives? (10:13)
- When Tim began to become more open to music-related input from his parents. (12:36)
- What sort of structure was there for the kids' daily practice? (18:24)
- Was there a reward system in place to encourage practicing (aka bribes?) (20:02)
- What did Paul and Virginia do if Tim REAAAALLY didn't want to practice? (22:08)
- Paul and Virginia on the importance of recognizing that no two children are alike, and the various ramifications of this observation. (24:16)
- The first piece Tim really got excited about playing. And Paul's reaction to this. (29:02)
- The moment that Tim announced his intentions to pursue music as a career. And Paul's reaction to *that*. (31:30)
- The ways in which Tim felt supported by his parents, rather than criticized (though there were those moments too). (34:19)

## Notes

- Virginia references the book [Developing Talent in Young People](#) (27:52)

## More fun stuff

- Tim shares a lot of terrifically practical and useful tips on playing and practicing – from improving rhythm to more reliable shifts – on violinist Lynn Kuo's Violynn Chats (I particularly like the Cavani Quartet's "Shakespearean Counting" exercise): [Fast Notes & Fast Rides with Timothy Kantor](#)
- And here's Tim performing with the [Afiara Quartet](#), in an intriguing concert format which appears to be part talk show, part live concert, part live webcast: [Afiara String Quartet at Zoomer Hall](#)

## Date Created

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