

**Dear Fourth Grade Parents,**

Although the new school year is still many weeks away, I am writing to share important information regarding the orchestra program and required instrumental lessons for students entering the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. As you know, your child has the choice of the violin, viola, or cello. The [choice of instrument](#) is up to you and your child. However, please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding which instrument is right for your child. My email address is [stuckenbruckd@waldorfgarden.org](mailto:stuckenbruckd@waldorfgarden.org), and my cell phone number is 516-538-2554 (call or text). Once the instrument decision has been made, it is important to **arrange for rental before September**. Please see a list of recommended rental agents below.

In September 2017, the fourth grade students will begin meeting twice a week for orchestra class, with separate classes for the cellos and the violins/violas. As the year progresses, we will begin to combine the instruments during orchestra class so that the students can practice playing together as a group.

Fourth grade students, including those who have never taken private lessons before, will be required to take **weekly private lessons** – either at School (using one of the private teachers, listed below), or with a teacher of their choice outside of School, and practice at home regularly. Private lessons arranged at School will happen on a rotation during the school day.

For students wishing to take their music lessons at School, I will assign a private teacher during the first week of school. The assigned teacher will then contact parents and set-up a lesson schedule. If you require special accommodations please contact me directly. Half-hour lessons cost \$35 per session. Parents will be invoiced directly by the private instructor on a monthly basis. It is important to note that private lesson instructors are not responsible for lessons cancelled without 24-hour notice. If your child is sick please notify your private lesson instructor as soon as possible.

The School recognizes that the cost of private lessons can be a financial hardship for some families. A brochure and grant application for the [Jeanette Resnick Music Lesson Endowment Fund](#), which provides subsidies for students in the 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades, is below. Please remember that overall funding is limited, so if you are interested in applying for a grant, I encourage you to do so as soon as you receive the application in August.

Learning how to play a stringed instrument has many long-term developmental benefits for a child. I encourage you to read the section at the end of this document for more information regarding the benefits of instrumental study.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Dale Stuckenbruck**

Director of Music

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### List of Private Teachers:

- **Dr. Dale Stuckenbruck:** violin, viola
- **Max Flanagan,** violin, viola
- **Ms. Hyunju Ji,** violin, viola
- **Ms. Janet Holmes:** cello, bass
- **Mr. Steve DeBellis:** drum, percussion
- **Mr. Steve Greenfield:** flute, clarinet, saxophone

### Recommended Rental Agents for Stringed Instruments:

The following stores allow rental payments to accumulate towards the purchase price of an instrument in the future. Do not buy an instrument from ebay.com unless it is returnable and has been seen by your instrumental teacher. The setup of the instrument is most important and needs to be adjusted by a luthier.

1. An excellent online rental service I have found:

**Johnson Strings:** <https://www.johnsonstring.com/rental/>

Johnson String Instrument

1029 Chestnut Street

Newton Upper Falls, MA 02464

[info@johnsonstring.com](mailto:info@johnsonstring.com)

Tel: 617. 964. 0954

Toll Free: 800. 359. 9351

2. **Flushing Violin Shop (Sophie, strings only)**

Phone: 718-353-6815

Email: [flushingviolinshop@gmail.com](mailto:flushingviolinshop@gmail.com)

By appointment only

135-15 37th Avenue, Suite 3F, Flushing, NY 11354

3. **The Long Island Violin Shop (Charles Rufino, strings only)**

8 Elm Street, Huntington NY 11743-3402

Phone: (631) 427-3569, Fax: (631) 223-2269

E-mail: [info@liviolinshop.com](mailto:info@liviolinshop.com) Charles Rufino: LI Violin Shop

4. **Samuel Kolstein and Son (Barri Kolstein, strings only)**

795 Foxhurst Road, Baldwin

(516) 546-9300

## Why Instrumental Study at the Waldorf School of Garden City

Above all, the ideal goal should remain that we wish for our students to have the experience of making music with one another. This is an act of

- **Empowerment** (I experience my own competence)
- **Self-validation** (My part is integral to the whole)
- **Socialization** (You are not in "my circle" but we can have a relationship through playing together)
- **Creative expression** (the ultimate experience of our humanity)

Rudolf Steiner makes a real distinction about the role that musical instruments play in this regard, above and beyond what can be experienced through singing. (See the 5th to last paragraph of Lecture VI, "[The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone](http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA/GA0283/19230308p01.html)" at <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA/GA0283/19230308p01.html>) The ideal goal here is that each and every student leaves our school with an experience of him or herself as a musician, a creator of music, which is the birthright of every human being! The experience of instrumental music is a perfect example of the holistic value that Waldorf Education places on the equal emphasis of head/heart/and hands as a path to the development of balanced and healthy human beings. This balance is being threatened everywhere in life today, so we should assume as a given, that this kind of activity, that used to be considered an expected experience for a cultured person, is becoming more and more foreign to people in general, which makes our job more challenging, to be sure. The arts are being cut everywhere because it is just becoming too hard to educate parents as to why supporting artistic work is so important for their children's development, and among the students, it is becoming too hard to fight the alarming increase and addiction to the consumption of recorded music. Doing, all together, is becoming a chore, especially doing anything that involves a daily discipline. In most Waldorf schools, the students begin an orchestral string instrument in grade 4; some schools, including ours, bring this in grade 3. Working as a group has the benefit of working together on a common goal, fulfilling a task together, and cultivating an ensemble as the children set out to experience the joy of creating music together. Although in mainstream education there is currently an obsession with science, math, technology and engineering (STEM), some educators see that arts also promote skills seen as important in academic and life success. (That's why some people talk about changing the current national emphasis on STEM to STEAM.) Here is a list of skills you learn from studying a musical instrument:

- ♪ **Being Well-rounded** – While outside of Waldorf Education being well-rounded may not be as en vogue as it used to be, it is certainly not regarded as a bad thing. You may not have the next Jascha Heifetz on your hands, but that's okay. Your violin player will certainly be able to appreciate Heifetz in a whole new way after a few years of lessons. Being well-rounded may not be en vogue, but I don't know anyone who has ever regretted being so. "The arts are an essential element of education, just like reading, writing, and arithmetic...music, dance, painting, and theater are all keys that unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment." – William Bennett, Former US Secretary of Education.
- ♪ **Confidence** – Learning a new skill like playing the violin gives children practice stepping out of their comfort zone and allows them to make mistakes and learn from them in rehearsal. Ensuring that the group learns their pieces really well gives children the confidence to perform in front of large audiences. This in turn bolsters their confidence in general.
- ♪ **Problem Solving** – Artistic development is born through the solving of problems. How do I make a better sound? How do I get this passage in my hands? How do I count this measure so I can play it correctly with other parts? Without even realizing it kids that learn a musical instrument are consistently being challenged to solve problems. All this practice problem solving develops children's skills in reasoning and understanding. This will help develop important problem-solving skills necessary for success in any career.
- ♪ **Perseverance** – When a child picks up a violin for the first time, she/he knows that playing Bach right away is not an option; however, when that child practices, learns the skills and techniques and doesn't give up, that Bach concerto is that much closer. In an increasingly competitive world, where people are being asked to

continually develop new skills, perseverance is essential to achieving success.

- ♪ **Self-control and Willpower** – There's the old joke, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice." But what children learn from that practice is no laughing matter. In the book *The Power of Habit*, author Charles Duhigg explains that music lessons can be a great way to increase willpower. Willpower is like a muscle, and the more it is used, the stronger it becomes. Learning an instrument requires willpower. Studies show that having willpower in one area that can have results in other areas of life. Duhigg quoted Dartmouth researcher Todd Heatherton as saying that music lessons are important in ways unrelated to creating a good musician. "When you learn to force yourself to practice for an hour . . . you start building self-regulatory strength." A kid who can sit down to play the violin for 20 or 30 minutes becomes a High School student who can get his/her homework done. Also, children learn to recognize that the hardest part is getting over the initial "hump" to get started. Once you start practicing, you can loose yourself in it and it's fun.
- ♪ **Dedication** – When kids get to practice following through with artistic endeavors that result in a finished product or performance, they learn to associate dedication with a feeling of accomplishment. They practice developing healthy work habits of being on time for rehearsals and performances, respecting the contributions of others, and putting effort into the success of the final piece. In the performing arts, the reward for dedication is the warm feeling of an audience's applause that comes rushing over you, making all your efforts worthwhile.
- ♪ **Progress exemplified** – It is often difficult for children to realize how much they have learned because they are always in the midst of learning yet more. While learning a musical instrument, progress becomes apparent: pieces that were too hard to play before suddenly feel easy. That can be a great source of pride for a child.
- ♪ **Focus** – The ability to focus is a key skill developed through ensemble work. Keeping a balance between listening and contributing involves a great deal of concentration and focus. It requires each participant to not only think about their role, but to consider how their role contributes to the big picture of what is being created. Recent research has shown that participation in the arts improves children's abilities to concentrate and focus in other aspects of their lives.
- ♪ **Non-Verbal Communication** – Through experiences in orchestra, children learn to breakdown the mechanics of body language. While they are making music together, they become versant in deciphering the conductor's instructions and directions, which are purely non-verbal.
- ♪ **Receiving Constructive Feedback** – Receiving constructive feedback in rehearsal or about a performance is a regular part of any arts instruction. Children learn that feedback is part of learning and it is not something to be offended by or to be taken personally. It is something helpful. The goal is the improvement of skills and evaluation is incorporated at every step of the process. Each rehearsal and lesson has built in parameters to ensure that critique is a valuable experience and greatly contributes to the success of the final piece.
- ♪ **Collaboration and Teamwork** – Not all kids are athletes, but all kids need to be good teammates. Musical groups like string ensembles, orchestras and choirs are a great way to get the experience of working together with peers toward a common goal. Most arts disciplines are collaborative in nature and playing in a string ensemble or orchestra certainly is the essence of collaboration. Through playing together, children practice working together, sharing responsibility, and compromising with others to accomplish a common goal. When a child has a part to play in a music ensemble he/she begins to understand that his/her contribution is necessary for the success of the group. Through these experiences children gain confidence and start to learn that their contributions have value even if they don't have the hardest part or "the melody." Working on a piece together requires patience - musicians in a group can't all play at the same time, not all members of the group learn at the same pace and they need to be encouraging to each other in order to each the goal. Certainly what they produce together is far more impressive than what each would produce alone.
- ♪ **Accountability** – When children practice creating something collaboratively they get used to the idea that their actions affect other people. They learn that when they are not prepared or on-time, that other people suffer. Through the arts, children also learn that it is important to admit that you made a mistake and take responsibility for it. Because mistakes are a regular part of the process of learning in the arts, children begin to see that mistakes happen. We acknowledge them, learn from them and move on.

- ♪ **Creativity** – Being able to think on your feet, approach tasks from different perspectives and think ‘outside of the box’ will distinguish your child from others. The more creatively the children can approach the issues involved learning an instrument, the better they will sound on the instrument. If children have practice thinking creatively, it will come naturally to them now and in their future careers.
- ♪ **Increased Math Understanding and Performance** – There's been a well-documented connection between music and math skills. The ancient Greeks already said that music was math in sound. In fact, with music children can experience math on a different level: with feeling, in their body, with their ears. A simple example would be fractions: A quarter note is half as long as a half note. While playing the note values children can feel those differences, rather than just understand them intellectually. Middle school students who participated in “formal instrumental or choral music instruction . . . outperformed [their peers]” in algebra. This is according to a study of more than 6,000 students, which appeared in the *Journal of Adolescent Research*. The research suggests that, “musicians process music in the same cortical regions that adolescents process algebra.”
- ♪ **Benefit to Reading Skills** – A study in the *Psychology of Music* showed that students who received musical training had superior cognitive reading skills when compared to classmates who did not have the same experience. *Science Daily* reported that, “The authors say there are similarities in the way that individuals interpret music and language and “because neural response to music is a widely distributed system within the brain.... it would not be unreasonable to expect that some processing networks for music and language behaviors, namely reading, located in both hemispheres of the brain would overlap.”
- ♪ **A Sense of Belonging** – The need to fit in and to feel like they are a part of a group is particularly strong in tweens. Being in an orchestra can help tweens feel more connected to their peers and feel like they have a place.
- ♪ **Form of Self-expression** – Although tweens do very much want to fit in, they are at the same time discovering who they are and how to express themselves. That's tough at 10, 11 and 12. Where words fail, music can express the intense emotions tweens are feeling, often for the first time. If they have learned how to play an instrument earlier on, they will be able to use that as a medium of self-expression.

## Sources

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1. <http://waldorfmusic.org> - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/22/top-10-skills-children-learn-from-the-arts/>
2. [http://www.chicagonow.com/tween-us/2013/06/7-ways-playing-a-musical-instrument-can-benefit-tweens /](http://www.chicagonow.com/tween-us/2013/06/7-ways-playing-a-musical-instrument-can-benefit-tweens/)