



IS IT really POSSIBLE?!



Victoria Ossa started learning the violin from scratch via online learning during the Circuit Breaker 2020, (4 years old) and has made tremendous progress since then; with most lessons still carried out online!

Let's take a look at her journey and find out how all these are possible!

To Michelle (M: Victoria's mummy) & Victoria (V):

Victoria (Vicky) started learning the violin from scratch and online during the Circuit Breaker 2020; what was that experience like for you and Vicky?

V: I found it fun to have violin lessons online!

M: It was a novel experience for Victoria at the time, so she was always excited to log on, and we didn't encounter any significant difficulties learning online. Because Victoria was only 4 when she started, I would accompany her throughout the lesson, manage the devices, and help to note down anything that Teacher Christina would point out. Since I don't know anything about playing the violin, I would record Teacher Christina demonstrating things, so that Victoria could play it back during her daily practice, and so that I could have something to refer to when I help her with practice. Actually it turned out that circuit breaker was a really good time to start learning a new instrument too. Since we couldn't go out, we had a lot more unhurried time at home to practise and make music together. Even with simple one-line melodies, Sofia or I would play the 2nd violin line on the piano and Victoria would play along, which helped make her practice even more enjoyable and gave her extra motivation to improve.

What were your main concerns during the process and how were the different issues resolved?

V: I didn't have any concerns!

M: I was unsure if Victoria would be able to learn well and understand her lessons online, but it turned out that it was not a problem at all. 30 minutes was an appropriate length for an online lesson for a 4 year old, and Teacher Christina annotated scores via the shared screen and drew concepts out on the Zoom whiteboard to help her (and me) know what to refer to and to help her understand things. On the odd occasion that we got stuck during practice or didn't understand something, Teacher Christina has always very graciously answered our questions via text, and has even on occasion recorded short video demonstrations to help us. Online lessons have been pretty smooth-sailing all the way. =)

How did learning online change the way both of you look at music, the learning process and what surprised you?

M: Whether music lessons are online or in-person, students need to take responsibility for their own learning journey. I think that learning online during the pandemic has emphasised this more, not just for violin but for everything that the children learn. The 'distance' between the teacher and the student in an online lesson forces a student to be more independent and take more initiative with her learning since she doesn't have her teacher physically next to her guiding or helping to motivate her. As an example, when Teacher Christina gives her specific instructions, she has to look for the line and bar numbers in the score, look for the notes or the specific annotations that Teacher Christina is referring to and pay close attention to what is going on in order to keep up. This builds independence and helps her to take ownership of her learning too.

Vicky has progressed tremendously in a short period of time, especially with her foundations being built through online learning and yet being able to overcome so many challenges.

What do you think are the key factors that empowered her with respect to her lessons, practices, personality and mindset?

V: I have to practise a lot to improve. I enjoy the sound of the violin, and playing nice pieces makes me feel happy. I get a sense of satisfaction when I master something, so it makes me very determined to keep trying.

M: Victoria has been able to progress in the violin because she has a supportive and skillful teacher who cares about not just her technical ability, but about her learning attitudes and dispositions and her enjoyment of the music as well. It's been so valuable to us to have a teacher who is flexible, adaptable and skillful in teaching online so that Victoria could continue to learn without interruption despite the constant changes over the past 2 years due to Covid.

Aside from that, I believe her enjoyment of the music and the instrument has played a big part in motivating her to keep practising. We started her on violin because before Covid, her sister's piano school (Musique Space) used to invite the Lorong Boys to accompany their students at their annual concert. This experience was very special and impactful for them, and gave them a taste of playing (for Sofia) and listening to chamber music in a very personal way. Whenever the girls listened to music together, we would talk about which instruments they could hear, and they would dream about playing their favourite pieces together someday. Although Victoria was already learning the piano at the time, we thought that if they had a desire to play together, it would be nice to let Victoria learn a different instrument so that they could work towards their goal. So in a sense, she has been motivated by her love for the music from the start, and it definitely helps to keep her going when things get challenging. The whole family also loves hearing her music in the home, and we make sure to let her know it everyday. I think she finds joy in that too.

Regarding practice, we try to stay disciplined and practise daily, because I know that she enjoys the violin more when she is able to play well. If she goes a few days without practising, it's harder to pick up again, and it's demoralising for her if she's lost some of the fluency she had before. In that sense staying disciplined with daily practice helps to keep the practice experience much more positive and enjoyable.

To Michelle:

You've done a great job with ensuring that Vicky keeps up with her practices and pointers absorbed during the lessons. As a parent, what are some of the existing challenges and struggles you face as you guide your kids at home? What kind of support would you like to have more of with regards to their music learning journey?

M: One challenge is the fact that I knew nothing about the violin before we started, but that's also the most exciting part: to get to learn something new alongside her and to go on that journey together. Christina has been very supportive on this front, and has always been happy to explain and clarify things for me. I think the support we have is more than sufficient.

Another challenge is finding the time, energy, patience and discipline to make sure the children practise daily and practise well. I guess this is a matter of priorities. We try to practice earlier in the day before we all (me included) are cranky and tired from the day's activities, and in order to do this we need to plan and organise our time well, and sometimes we have to forgo other activities in order to protect time for music.





To Vicky:

**What is the best part about learning music for you?
What makes you smile?**

V: I like the sound of music very much, so the best part of learning music is that I can hear and enjoy the music that I play. I also love it when I manage to play a piece successfully for someone, and especially if they enjoy it.

**Which part of your music journey is most fun for you?
What do you think of when your practices get difficult?**

V: The most fun part of my music journey is being able to play nice pieces. When my practices get difficult, I get very frustrated. But I know that if I focus I will get better. So I usually ask my mummy for a hug, because she pretends to give me petrol and I get energy to continue practising.

To Vicky and Sophia(S: Vicky's older sister):

Do you enjoy playing chamber music and making music with your sister? What makes it fun and do you guys argue when rehearsing? What do you do or think when it gets tough to make music together?

V: Yes I do. Practising together is very fun, and the sound of two instruments playing together is very nice. We argue a little bit when we have trouble coordinating, but we will usually pause and think about what we should do and then try to improve.

S: I love to play chamber music with my sister because it is much more special to play music with someone else than to play it by yourself. I find playing chamber music fun because I like to work together with another musician to create a piece of music that sounds wonderful with its different parts played together. We do argue sometimes when we play together, but we usually just try again, and our arguments don't last for very long. When it gets tough and we can't coordinate properly, or one of us trips and it's difficult to get back on track, we usually just need to do a bit more practice on our own, or with a particular metronome speed, and then afterwards we are usually ok to play together again. Sometimes we get frustrated, but we know that if we just keep on practising, the finished product will be very nice both to hear and to play. So that motivates us to keep on practising even when it gets tough.

Do you think that mummy plays an important role in your musical life? What would you like to say to your mummy?

V: Yes she does, because she helps me get my playing right and improve, and she encourages me to keep trying when I get upset with my practice, by giving me hugs which give me energy to persevere. "I love you Mummy!"

S: Yes, she definitely does, because she encourages me and pushes me on when I don't want to do things that I need to for my music learning. When I was starting to learn music, she sat with me during all my practices and helped me to practice well and build the foundations that I needed so that I can play independently and confidently now. "I love you and thank you Mummy!"

