

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **What makes the Peckins Studio unique?**

Joshua Peckins has extensive, international performance experience and training, and is also deeply devoted to his students and the studio. This combination offers students an opportunity to study technique and interpretation skills that have been tested and proved on the concert stage with a teacher who is sincerely committed to their personal learning and growth.

Joshua has performed throughout North and South America, Europe and Asia, from Carnegie Hall to Beijing's Performance Arts Center. Locally, he has performed with top orchestras including the Boston Philharmonic and A Far Cry, as well as played numerous solo recitals and concertos with orchestra (Brahms, Mendelssohn, Sarasate, Mozart, Bach, John Williams, etc.) He has performed for the federal president of Austria and made concert tours in Japan, Italy, France, South America, etc.

Joshua is committed to passing on these skills to his students. While a concert career certainly may not be the right fit for every student, these attitudes of excellence and joy in artistic, high level performance are available to everyone. Through one-on-one private teaching and a variety of innovative enrichment projects and studio-wide initiatives, Joshua brings the professional concert experience into the teaching studio.

### **What are enrichment projects?**

These are special projects designed by Joshua to help students deeply understand and assimilate the most important aspects of violin/viola study. They include handouts, dedicated lesson plans focusing on the project's key elements, and simple assignments at home to plant the seeds of learning and thought. They dramatically enrich the student's experience, and often lead to bursts of motivation, understanding and progress.

A recent project focused on understanding and adopting more effective and efficient practice

techniques. For another example, all students in the studio practiced every day in January, 2015 – they met for a studio class mid-month to discuss challenges and strategies, and celebrated their success with a recital at the end of the month. An upcoming project clarifies the essential elements of technique.

All enrichment projects can be adapted for students at any level, so everyone in the studio participates. This leads to discussion among the students and furthers the studio culture of best effort, thoughtful growth and joyful curiosity.

## **Recitals?**

Frequent performance opportunities are essential to good training, and the Peckins Studio holds several formal recitals throughout the year. Family and friends are warmly invited!

Before each recital, a studio class is dedicated to performance preparation. Students practice performing in this low-pressure environment, and become more comfortable playing live on stage. Effective techniques for memorization, performing with confidence, and playing with piano are all thoroughly covered in the weeks leading up to a recital.

## **What is studio class?**

Students meet several times each semester for studio class, which is based on the conservatory model used by the most renowned teachers at top music institutions throughout the world. Students meet as a group with the teacher to perform for each other and offer constructive feedback and advice. Joshua guides the discussion. Regularly giving and accepting feedback from one's peers is often a new experience for students who have never had studio class before, and it offers two huge benefits:

First, it gives students a frequent, low-pressure opportunity to perform for others. The atmosphere is supportive and encouraging, so students are able to experiment with new pieces and techniques. This is excellent preparation for auditions and recitals!

Second, hearing the advice of one's peers is highly motivational. Students participating in studio class realize that they are part of a community of musicians working on similar goals and overcoming similar challenges. Music study can be a lonely pursuit with all the solitary hours spent in the practice room, and this sense of communal striving is invaluable.

## **Help with orchestra and chamber music?**

As a faculty member at NEC Prep and the Rivers Conservatory, Joshua is personally familiar with the many ensemble opportunities available to students in the Boston area, and helps students navigate the maze of options. His students have participated in top orchestra and chamber music programs at NEC Prep, the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Rivers, NMYO and BYSO.

There are specific and slightly different skills involved in preparing orchestral and chamber music parts. Joshua draws on his own professional experience with orchestras and chamber ensembles to support his students in choosing repertoire and preparing for auditions, learning ensemble parts

efficiently and effectively, and mastering unique ensemble skills.

## **Performance library?**

Joshua's students have access to a rich library of DVD's and books, featuring some of the most important violinists, violists, orchestras, and pedagogues in history. The library is free for all studio members, and presents an opportunity to enjoy and become familiar with world-class playing and artistic thinking.

Joshua will select specific books or recordings to reenforce current learning goals. This can range from a pedagogical description of a particular technique, to a recording of a renowned interpreter of a student's current repertoire, to a psychology book on focus and concentration.

## **How much should a student practice?**

There are many time management and motivational techniques that can help a student improve his/her practice habits, and Joshua is happy to guide any student towards a more joyful and productive practice schedule. As long as the desire to improve is there, a path forward can be found! The most important thing is that a student's goals line up with the amount of practice time:

**A student on the professional track** should aim to practice 3-4 hours a day with excellent concentration and practice skills. It's not really possible to practice more than 4 hours per day, and still be giving your best work – if you are able to practice significantly more than this, it might be worth asking whether you are truly pushing yourself during the practice sessions! Just “clocking time” won't bring real progress, and those extra hours would be much better spent building human relationships, reading, playing chamber music and listening to recordings, exercising, and otherwise engaging with life! Still, 3-4 hours per day are necessary in order to build an advanced technique and cover the vast repertoire.

**An intermediate student** who wants to work seriously, but also has other important goals and does not want to focus exclusively on the instrument, should practice about 1.5-2 hours a day. This will allow enough time to understand the instrument, learn the “real technique,” and play beautiful concerts.

**A very young student or someone playing as a light hobby** should practice at least 30 minutes, six times week. This will allow at least enough progress to enjoy playing and make the other expenses of music study worth it!

Quality and consistency are, by far, the most important things for a practice schedule. This is a place where “The Tortoise and the Hare” fable rings true! A student who consistently practices the same amount every day over many years will overtake many others who practice much more, but frequently skip days or even miss whole weeks due to burn-out or distraction.

## **Suzuki or Traditional?**

The Suzuki Method has done wonderful things for early music education, and made lessons available

to many students who might not otherwise have had access to quality instruction. Joshua completed Suzuki teacher training for beginning violinists and violists, and draws on some elements of that teaching method when working with young students.

The majority of Joshua's teaching philosophy, however, is grounded in the traditional Russian School of technique and the Viennese School of interpretation. Having studied in the United States and Europe with masters of these traditions, he strongly believes in this approach. Based on the individual needs of each student, Joshua selects repertoire and etudes from a large variety of pedagogical materials.

Good musical training, however, mostly comes down to the personalities of the student and teacher and the information actually being taught – the “method” or “system” used is largely irrelevant compared to these important things.

### **Studio policy/schedule/what am I signing up for?**

The Peckins Studio offers the individual attention of a private studio with the organization and solidity of a full music school. Students receive a calendar of all lessons, studio classes, and recitals at the beginning of the semester. The studio policy clearly explains everything from the make-up/scheduling policy to what happens on snow days! (Contact Joshua for details.)

There is a limited number of available spaces in the studio each year, and Joshua commits fully to each accepted student. In return, students are expected to fully commit to their studies! A well-structured studio policy makes everyone's expectations and responsibilities clear up-front, and has been wonderfully helpful for current and past students.

Contact Joshua for more information:

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