



Life for a Musical Family



The Dowlan family all share music together.

By JJ Jackson

Scott Dowlan and Linda Baker have all three of their kids enrolled in music lessons. They believe in sharing music as a family so much, they are taking lessons, as well.

"It's awesome to have music in your house. It creates so much good energy in the (home) environment," Scott said.

The kids - Celeste, Nigel and Stella - find any chance to play music, such as a little entertainment for their parents once the kids finish their dinner.

"(The kids) usually finish up really fast, clear their plates and play for us while we finish eating," Linda said. That starts the music and ends up being the segue into family concerts, which happen frequently at their home.

"Play time" at the Dowlan house is "music time." This is the childrens' choice, Scott and Linda said.

"We play piano more than just play," Celeste said.

Scott and Linda will also sit together and talk about music theory to combine and develop their understanding further.

"Last night, we were sitting at the piano... I take lessons on guitar, but yet, we were transferring that knowledge to the keyboard... and it helps (us) visualize it in another sense and see how it all fits together," Scott said.

Between the whole family, they study piano, guitar, ukulele, drums, and perfect pitch with the T.A.P. Method. They are truly a musical family, learning multiple instruments and helping to teach each other at home.

There are struggles that come with a musical family. Scott said his biggest personal struggle is always finding time to play music at home, but Celeste said she has plenty of time to play.

"Celeste has made it a real priority, which is awesome, and same with Nigel," Scott said. "(Nigel) got home the other day and before he even did his homework he was playing piano, not out of necessity but out of fun... He went from song-to-song in his song book and played every song... but it was out of enjoyment."

Linda said her biggest struggle is trying to keep the "momentum" of things moving forward with so many things happening with the family.

"I felt like giving up about a month ago, for myself, because it was difficult for me to practice and... I felt guilty for taking up a lesson without doing my homework," Linda said. During the final 30 days, we made adjustments to the lesson time, as well as giving Linda more tools to play with her children. She discovered that she didn't have to write herself out of her family bonding time.

"It's like the load is lifted. Now, I'm (also) learning piano!" Linda said. "It just flipped it on it's head. I really appreciate you (teachers). I don't think we would be going as strong if it wasn't for this school."

A big part of what has helped the Dowlans find an effective family music system has been good communication. Scott added that the repetition of weekly lessons provides a good "backbone" to keep things moving forward.

"We may struggle here or there, but having that regular routine and having great teachers really continues to carry it through," he said.

With a new sense of calm focus, struggles can always be worked out, and the Dowlans are finding their balance.

"The kids just go on (and play) anytime," Linda said. "We're not able to stick to the 'concert-every-day' thing... so, we just try to make it spontaneous and do the best we can... there's an ebb-and-flow in everything, you can't just be on it all the time."

They're trying to make music a pleasure.

"I remember when I was a kid I had to practice everyday for like an hour, and I ended up leaving it after 3 or 4 years and it wasn't a fond memory," Linda said.

Music is a strong tradition in both sides of the family, but the way music lessons were presented to Scott and Linda was forced practice time and very little family bonding. They want their children to choose to play, rather than being forced. Creating an environment of music appreciation is what Scott believes has helped instill a passion and dedication to music in the children.

"Instead of it being a burden it became a passion," he said. "And so, as a default, they now have a routine that's very regular. They play the piano multiple times a day... they'll play 5 (to) 10 minutes, and then do something else, and then jump back on it and play more."

The kids' love for music is apparent.

"Celeste comes to her music lesson, not only having prepared her assigned songs, but with several new songs figured out just for fun," Bonnie teVelde said. "She is super motivated. The sky is the limit for this family."

"I think if you let them figure it out for themselves - that's what you really want," Linda said. "You want them to be able to have the spark in them to say, 'oh my gosh, I want to go play!'"

Musicians Come From Musical Families



Bonnie teVelde, owner/instructor

We have two complimentary missions:

- 1) To discover every child's inner musical genius, building personal confidence.
- 2) To nurture and help create space for a musical family to emerge.

How do time-strapped parents end up as "musical families" - one small step at a time. The key is to START.

Step 1: Make the time to **stay at the school** during your children's lessons.

Step 2: Ask the teacher if/how you can participate in one piece of the lesson.

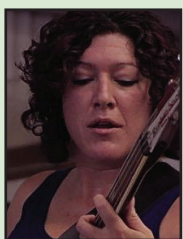
Step 3: What's your favorite instrument? Talk to your family about why you like that instrument.

Step 4: Keep your eyes open, ask your child's teacher or look on Craigslist. The universe may choose to send you an instrument.

Step 5: Don't be afraid to communicate your favorite instrument choice to child's teacher. They may know of a way for you to learn and work on it, or even work out a duet part for you, at your level, to play with your child.

Step 6: Add 15 minutes to your child's time for your own lesson, or add a lesson at the same time as your child's with your own teacher. **SITTING IN ON LESSONS IS FREE.** Don't feel like you are out of place.

Step 7: Look for ways to participate in music as a family. Go to a concert together. Better yet, put on a concert at home together. Learn the same song(s) so you can all perform together and share the experience. Ask any one of the teacher at the school if you ever have any questions.



Shea Kelly

Featured Teacher Profile: Shea Kelly

Teaches: Piano, Guitar, Bass, The T.A.P. Method

Musical Background: I had classical lessons from an early age. Since being a teenager, I've traveled, performed and/or recorded with a musical theater group, choir and numerous bands, including a professional Aerosmith cover band. You may have seen one of my bands play at The Fillmore, or open up for Alice Cooper, or heard my music on the radio. After a college degree, touring, recording, and performing, I enjoy extending the lessons I've learned to students at teVelde Music. **Teaching Philosophy:** Playing music is a lifetime journey of discovery and exploration. I've been amazed to see great music pass through families. Music is all-inclusive and ingrained in many musicians' culture through family and faith. That philosophy shows in my own playing and in the development of the lessons I teach. I love seeing the smile of satisfaction on a student's face as they overcome a challenge - we're both changed.

Tips From Another Excellent Musical Family



The amazing Gabe and Andrea Rojas.

By Kelly Rojas

I asked Gabe if he wanted to take lessons because I saw the signs of talent on the teVelde website. He was almost 10. My grandfather was blind and played 11 instruments, so there had to be a genetic piece of talent in Gabe. Alex, my husband, is real percussive. He hasn't played an instrument but always had a really good beat.

Gabe has always played spontaneously, 10 min. here, 10 min. there... I have never had to tell him to practice. Structured practice time would not work for his personality type. He took one hour a week of lessons with Bonnie for the first year and did all the School of Rock summer camps. After the first year, we saw such success that we expanded to 1.5 hrs, per week, and added a second lesson a week with Treven.

He started violin with a different teacher after about 2 years and something changed. We worked with Bonnie and figured out the correct instrument was cello, and the correct teacher for his personality type was Anna. Now, he loves cello as much as piano! Anna knows when to be more strict and when to have fun. She loves to play cello duets with him.

Gabe gets structured practice time at his lessons, 4 days a week, and the frequency of the lessons provides a perfect environment for him to learn the language of music through total immersion. I would burn down the bank to make sure he gets what he needs. The music has given him a sense of confidence and purpose.

Now that he plays in our church band, he has to listen, follow the lead, and improvise. There is no music written for cello in what they are playing. From his

classical training and playing in the youth symphony, he learned to be structured and precise. Now, he knows how to listen and improvise. They give him the key they are in and the general framework of the song - and he plays. Everyone tells me that the band had been missing something, and that the cello was the missing piece. All of the band members are adults over 40, and even though Gabe's only 13, he loves it and fits right in. I believe he has the best teaching team I could possibly think of working with him!

Andrea started lessons when she was 4, with Sierra. She was very shy at first, but Sierra knows what she's doing. Andrea loves to conduct, because it gives her control over her environment. Sierra is sensitive to exactly what she needs. Andrea added violin lessons last year. Amanda comes in early to talk to her, and ask her about her day for 15 min before the lesson. That is so cool! She has even offered to come to our house and play the violin part to songs that Gabe is learning in symphony. How awesome is that?

The teVelde teaching team I have behind my kids is the very best and I am confident the school will always have their best interest in mind, no matter what. I can express my concerns, and I know Bonnie and the teachers will listen. Each teacher comes out to discuss the lessons with me so I know what is going on. They take the time to listen to my concerns, as well.

Hints for others: communicate with the instructors and go deeper - if you don't ask what is going on, the general response may be "it was fine." It's important to be there and pay attention to what is going on in the lesson. We text, we talk, and these teachers are my friends. I love them, I respect them, and the fact that they care so much about my children is invaluable to me.

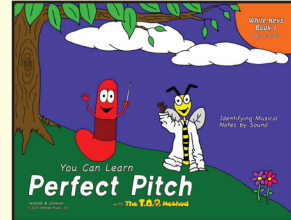
I always take a few moments at the end of every lesson to ask:

- 1) How did it go?
- 2) What did you do?
- 3) How can I help?

I work a lot of hours every week, but the kids are always first.

T.A.P. Books Available

The first of our very own T.A.P. Method for Perfect Pitch learning kits have recently been published. Book 1 of the series is now for sale and includes a learning CD. Our students at teVelde Music have had tremendous success learning perfect pitch using The T.A.P. Method. The method's easy-to-use structure makes it possible for students of ANY AGE to learn perfect pitch.



Learn more about The T.A.P. Method for Perfect Pitch by going online to the official website at www.theTAPmethod.com.

Great Pianos for Sale

Now it's easier than ever to obtain a piano for your home! Even better, you can get a piano from one of the world's most respected and beloved brands, Yamaha.

Students and families that attend teVelde Music Schools can receive exclusive deals on pianos through a partnership with Keyboard Concepts, an authorized Yamaha dealer. The deals on Yamaha pianos you will find at teVelde Music aren't available anywhere else. Keyboard Concepts typically serves Southern California, making teVelde Music the only place in the area where you can find exclusive discounts, even beating out Costco prices.

Visit either teVelde Music campus, in San Luis Obispo or Arroyo Grande, to play one of Yamaha's fine pianos first-hand.

Signs of Musical Talent

A gift for music talent is present if your child shows some or all of these signs:

- 1) Sing or hum constantly.
- 2) Listen to their favorite songs repeatedly.
- 3) Get songs "stuck" in your head.
- 4) Constantly tap fingers on surfaces.
- 5) Ask to take lessons or draw pictures of an instrument.
- 6) Figure out tunes "by ear" with no written music.
- 7) Have relatives who play or sing, especially "by ear."

Children with signs of musical talent really maximize their talent when starting lessons early, as early as age 2. More at our website.

Up-Coming Events: Farmer's Market in San Luis Obispo

When: March 20, from 6-9 p.m.

Where: Downtown San Luis Obispo
teVelde Music Booth

All are invited to attend. Tell your child's teacher you'd love for your child to perform.



Welcome to our Newsletter!

Your up-to-date source for all that is happening at teVelde Music. If you have a comment or suggestion, please email the Editor at: jackson4425@gmail.com.