

# PLAYING THE VIOLIN:

## SO MUCH MORE THAN BEING A PROFESSIONAL

by Thornton Cline


**DID YOU KNOW** that only one to three percent of students that play music will go on to play professionally? Does that mean that the other 97 to 99 percent who have studied violin should be considered a “waste of time?” Absolutely not. I continually remind students and parents that I am not trying to make students professionals, but my intent is to instill the love of music in them. Who knows how many of them will go on to be connoisseurs of classical or other music – supporting music until the day they die. How many will go on to become better citizens and make significant contributions to society in fields other than in music? How many will become kinder and more loving people? How many will go on to use their violin playing therapeutically for relaxation or as a hobby?

### Famous people that played the violin un-professionally

1. Albert Einstein
2. Thomas Jefferson
3. John Tyler
4. Woodrow Wilson
5. Benjamin Franklin

Who would have guessed that playing music would have helped Albert Einstein to discover the Theory of Relativity? Presidents Thomas Jefferson, John Tyler and Woodrow Wilson all played the violin, as did Benjamin Franklin, who discovered electricity and was one of the founding fathers of the United States. These men may not have achieved these goals without the added confidence, determination, and discipline that comes from learning and playing the violin. Then there are the people who studied the violin who became professionals. One perfect example is Maud Powell who revolutionized the violin when she stepped into the Victor recording studio in 1904, and became the first woman and person to record violin playing. She took recording technology to its highest level by becoming the first solo instrumentalist ever recorded. That achievement transpired long before women were even able to vote.

Some people that play music question if all of these amazing people and achievements are actually a result of what I call the “violin effect” or merely coincidence, circumstance, luck or genetics. I have taught violin for over 25 years to more than 1,000 violin students. I can confidently tell you after delving into all of the scientific research, and the wealth of knowledge that I have learned from teaching, that there is definitely, beyond any doubt, a “violin effect”. That “violin effect” is a positive and influential force that is powerful, beneficial and long-lasting. When you delve into the myriad of scientific research on the positive and beneficial effects of playing the violin, you start to discover all of the fruit that has been borne as a direct result of the “violin effect”. Playing the violin develops a sharper memory, finer eye-hand coordination, stamina, more focused concentration, improved test scores, particularly in language, reading and mathematics. Playing the violin can result in improved ACT and SAT scores, better discipline, increased finger dexterity, improved motor skills, increased arm strength, improved posture, and lower stress levels. Violinists have greater confidence stronger feelings of accomplishment, and more opportunities to collaborate with others, along with a greater sense of community, not to mention the cardiovascular benefits from constant use of the upper torso.

Anyone who doubts that there is a “violin effect” related to playing music should perhaps take a second look. 

### About Thornton Cline

*Thornton Cline has been teaching violin, guitar and strings successfully for over 25 years. He was honored with Songwriter of the Year twice in a row by the Tennessee Songwriters Association for his hit song, “Love is The Reason” recorded by Engelbert Humperdinck and Gloria Gaynor. He has received Dove and Grammy Award nominations for his songs. His articles have appeared in numerous national magazines, newspapers and journals. He is author of “Band of Angels”, “Practice Personalities”, “Practice Personalities for Adults”, “The Amazing Incredible Shrinking Violin,” “The Amazing Incredible Shrinking Piano” on Hal Leonard Corporation and “The Contrary”.*

*Cline is an in-demand speaker for national conferences and workshop. He is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a B.M.E. in music education; the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana with a M.S. in music education and has completed all his doctoral course work toward his Ph. D. in music education at Eastman School of Music. Cline teaches violin and strings at Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. He lives in Hendersonville, Tennessee with his wife and two children.*

