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The Concord Conservatory of Music

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News at CCM



October is Practice for Pizza Month—All students who practice 30 days in October are invited to join us at the Pizza Party on Wednesday, November 1 at 5:30 pm in the North Hall. Be sure to print out a **CCM Practice Calendar** for your child and encourage them to practice every day. We encourage them to enjoy their practicing and have fun! *[See more below at Behind the Scenes>>](#)*



Upcoming School Student Recital: Saturday, October 21st at 1:00 pm, 2:30 pm, with a reception following.

October 14th, Monthly Bluegrass Jam— Want to Jam? Prefer to hang and listen?

Plan to join us on Saturday evening, October 14th for our first Monthly Bluegrass Jam of the season. The jam will begin at 7:00 and ends at 9:30 pm. We thank our sponsor, the [Boston Bluegrass Union](#), for helping us bring bluegrass jam sessions to our community. All ages; all levels; all welcome! Save the second Saturday of every month between October and June for the CCM Monthly Bluegrass Jam. The fee is \$5 payable at the door. Our jams are not just for experienced players! We want everyone to participate, even if you are just a beginner. So, come on out, tune up and jump in!

Pardon our Appearance—The West Concord Union Church renovations are almost complete. They say that by October 16th, we will all be able to use the front entrance to the building and have appropriate access to the lower level rooms. You can look forward to our October recitals performed in the Sanctuary, equipped with brand new seating.

Many thanks for continued understanding.

Are you a CCM friend yet? Join us on [Facebook](#) to hear the **Tune of the Week** and be the first to hear CCM news and more! See what music videos we like, photos we post, practice tips and articles we suggest, and discover what's new in the music world. Join us on [Facebook](#).

Behind the Scenes



Practice, Practice, Practice

Put away those procrastination pants, and bring an end to the excuses: October is our practice challenge month! We invite parents and students alike to launch the year on a positive note, setting up positive habits from the start. Students who practice every day in the month of October are invited to join us in a celebration of their achievements at 5:30 PM on November 1, at our Practice for Pizza Party.

Getting Started:

- **Create a routine.** Set aside a specific time of day when the student is feeling his/her best, then stick to it every day.
- **Dedicate a quiet space, free from distractions.**
- Set a mindful (and reasonable) intention for what you want to accomplish in each session.
- **Quality over quantity:** Use the time wisely, focusing energies on more challenging sections, for example, not waltzing through the easy parts. For young learners, 10 minutes may be enough to make headway.
- Avoid negative feedback. Positive feedback is a much more powerful motivator.
- Reward good work, especially with melted cheese. Join us for pizza on November 1, but congratulate your musician every day along the way, too.

For more ideas on how to make the most of practice sessions, please visit CCM's Practice Resource Center, where we have suggestions for parents with beginning students, and much more.

Faculty Spotlight - Tony Watt, *the Engineered Musician*



Does musical training improve a person's mathematical prowess? Alternatively, perhaps is the reverse true? Studies on the subject are not entirely conclusive (or sufficiently longitudinal) to say with scientific certainty, and while it's interesting to explore the connections, CCM's bluegrass teacher Tony Watt is careful about these claims. He trained as an engineer before becoming a full-time musician, but he doesn't suggest that one made him better at the other. Even so, he finds bridges between them in his daily work.

Tony grew up listening to his father, Steve Watt, play mandolin and banjo with the Boston Bluegrass Union. Watt senior taught junior to play rhythm guitar, and by the age of 13, Tony

became interested in bluegrass, eventually backing up his father at jams with some of the best bluegrass musicians in the Northeast. However, Tony also had a head for science, and when it came time to choose a college, he headed to Georgia Tech to earn an undergraduate degree in engineering. He also sought out monthly bluegrass jams in Atlanta. In 2004, he moved to Nashville to work toward his Ph.D. in materials science at Vanderbilt University. But the graduate degree was also “an excuse,” he says, to live in Music City. Scientist by day, Tony could be found every Monday night at the club 3rd and Lindsley, listening to the Time Jumpers with Vince Gill, or catching bluegrass and roots shows at the Station Inn.

In the decade since that degree program, Tony has devoted himself to music. “But my engineering and science training taught me to think critically about everything, and I’ve been able to look at my progression as a musician in a scientific way,” he says. Like a scientist collecting data points, Tony says he looks at what works and what doesn’t in his music, charting data points and exploring theories.

Left-brain thinking comes into play especially as a teacher working with new students. “I’m always trying to prioritize stuff for my students using a technical approach,” he says. For example, “Bluegrass is an incredibly improvisation-heavy style of music, but that can’t be the first thing you learn,” he says. Master the basics before you get creative, in other words.

One challenge for many new students has to do with standard notation and the way it appears on a page. Imagine one line of music with four measures, each measure made up of one whole note. Now imagine a second line of music with four measures, each filled with eighth notes: That second line of music will take up significantly more space on the page than the first, even as they both take the same amount of time to play. In other words: “The distance the eye travels as it scans the page from left to right isn’t related to the time it takes to play those notes in standard notation,” Tony says. That’s a complicated idea to navigate when one is also trying to maneuver around a new instrument.

Tony has come up with a left-brain solution: “I write my own tablature using Microsoft Excel,” he says. “My students look at it, and at first they’re baffled. Then they think it’s amazing. Then I tell them that I made it in Excel, and they laugh.” In essence, the method creates a grid, where every line has four measures, and all four measures line up top to bottom. “Now you’re seeing the timing visually, as well as reading it,” he says. The approach simplifies a common challenge for students who are new to music, Tony says, removing a layer of complexity to give students space to master the basics. From there they can get creative.

One of the most valuable lessons that he tries to impart on his students can be traced back to his engineering days. “When I look back on my schooling and think: What did I learn in that time? It wasn’t about learning rote facts,” he says. “It’s just teaching you how to think, how to approach a problem like a scientist, which means developing a theory for why something is the way it is, then figuring out a test for that theory, looking at the data, and judging the results. Every human is a scientist—part of life is answering questions, and music is problem-solving, too,” he says. “I don’t think it’s beyond anyone to be great in either math or science or music.” Or, maybe, both.

Why Music Matters: What are the benefits of listening to music at work?

Do you listen to music at work? What genre of music makes you more productive? Do you think it’s distracting or does it make you more accurate at work? Read the interesting article, [*Impact of Music on Work Place Productivity*](#) by Rebecca Sewkarran

Upcoming Area Performances

Saturday, November 4th, Fiddle Concert at Fiddle Hell— Sessions, workshops, concert, dance, and late-night jams all under one roof!

Fiddle Hell Massachusetts is a yearly gathering of fiddlers, cellists, and mandolin/guitar/banjo players to meet, jam, learn and have fun. It’s both friendly and diverse, crossing all ages and including many traditional fiddle styles. Typically, there are about 20% beginners, 50% intermediates, and 30% advanced players, with many workshop and jam session choices at each level. Roughly 15% of the attendees are kids, and there are some sessions just for them.

Walk-ins \$15 at the door. Included for Saturday Fiddle Hell attendees. Doors open at 6:20 pm. Concert 7:00 – 9:00 pm on Saturday November 4th. Easy Contradance follows at 9:30 – 11:00 pm. Westford Regency Inn, 219 Littleton Road, Westford. Free parking.

Ludovico Einaudi, Essential Einaudi, Friday, October 27, 8 pm at the Berklee Performance Center, 136 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston

Italian composer and pianist Ludovico Einaudi's hauntingly beautiful and evocative music defies categorization. Einaudi has produced 17 albums and composed scores for a plethora of major films including Clint Eastwood's *J. Edgar* and the Oscar-winning *Black Swan*.

Tickets: \$45 / \$60 / \$75

[To listen to a sample of his music and purchase tickets:](#)