



AMBASSADOR

American Suzuki Talent Education Center

University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point
College of Fine Arts and Communication

*Changing lives by providing the best in performance,
creativity, and expression*

February 2003

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

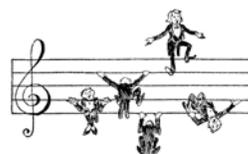
American Suzuki Institute photographer, Arthur Montzka, passed away in November. He was a good friend of the Institute and of mine. Because I know that many of you knew him, and in fact have collections of his photographs of your personal photo albums, I thought that I would include the brief article that I wrote for the next Suzuki Association of the Americas Journal. To make a donation to the memorial fund set up in his name contact the SAA at <http://www.suzukiassociation.org> or 1-888-378-9854.

The news came by email--"I regret to inform you that Art Montzka passed away in a traffic accident - today 25 November." I double checked to see who sent the message. Oh yes, it was Bonnie, an American Suzuki Institute Mom that I have known for many years. As impossible as it seemed, I knew that it had to be true.

Art and his camera were present and busy at many Institutes and Suzuki Conferences since the very early days of Suzuki Talent Education in the United States. The photographs that he took graced the covers of the SAA Journals, the pages of many Institute brochures and even Websites announcing activities throughout the Suzuki world. Because his photos captured student excellence, eagerness and joy, they had a profound and positive effect on the growth of the Suzuki movement.

Art Montzka photos reflect Art Montzka the man who was passionately involved in the world around him. He was able to catch the spirit of the people in his photos because he had an uncanny ability to connect to his subjects. He participated in the growth and development of the Suzuki movement because he willingly shared his gentle spirit and life experience as a member of the SAA Board of Directors, where he understood the value of listening carefully and then speaking. Art's passion for music showed in his excitement at hearing highly skilled young artists, and in the way he gave his undivided attention to a young student who wanted to show off a newly learned Happy Farmer.

Art loved gadgets and got real joy from telling his friends about the wonderful things each one could do. He shared this passion in a way no one could have expected, by contributing joyous and optimistic postlude music to his own memorial service via recently purchased midi equipment. Even with tears streaming down my face I could imagine the look of wonder on Art Montzka's face. Through the magic of technology he had one last opportunity share his passion for music with the people he loved.



"But I Don't Want To Get To Carnegie Hall!" Practicing For the Rest of Us

By Thomas Yang

It's me against the piano.
Why do I have to practice?
I'd rather play the radio.
I'd rather sit on cactus!
[.....]
Practicing is just the same thing,
Over and over and over and over...

(Brown, sung by the character Arthur Aardvark)

These words sung by the cartoon character Arthur Aardvark will unfortunately ring true to many music students for whom practicing is a repetitious and boring activity to be suffered in the cause of learning to play an instrument. This is a pity because practicing should be an enjoyable activity. I would even go so far as to suggest that one of the most important benefits of learning a musical instrument is that it gives you something to practice. That is, we do not practice to learn how to play an instrument as much as we learn to play an instrument so that we may practice.

Practicing is not merely a means to gain a valuable skill – it is a valuable thing in itself. It is in the truest sense a recreational activity that provides us with satisfaction and growth while almost by accident allowing us to gain a valued skill. Further, it trains us to enjoy a productive work experience and in doing so, encourages us to seek similar experiences elsewhere in life.

The sense of satisfaction one gets from working in a garden, the sense of empowerment when on a roll at the golf course, the sense of joy one sees in a world-class ice skater when everything is going well, are experiences of mental absorption, focus and timelessness. Michailyi Csikszentmihalyi calls experiences such as these “flow” experiences and in a fascinating book entitled Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience suggests that the enjoyment of life and the quality of human existence depends in large part on experiences such as these (43-70). The activities in which we are able to most fully involve ourselves are usually the activities that we enjoy the most, hence the more activities that we can “get into” the more things we can enjoy. According to Csikszentmihalyi, the high and low water marks of personal involvement in an activity are “flow” and “psychic entropy” – a term he uses for distractedness (36-39). Clearly, being in the state of flow leads to a sense of accomplishment and well-being. On the other hand, struggling along in the state of psychic entropy can prevent us from completing even necessary tasks, which in turn raises anxiety levels and contributes to unhappiness.

For flow to occur, a person needs a task and the necessary skills to accomplish that task (Csikszentmihalyi 42-45). For a student learning to play a musical instrument, it is important for her to achieve success in a sequence of increasingly complex activities because one of the characteristics of flow is forward movement (Csikszentmihalyi 46). Flow is experienced when there is an optimal relationship between the difficulty of the task and the student’s level of skill – a task too difficult for the skill level of the student will cause frustration and a task too easy will cause boredom (Csikszentmihalyi 74-75; Elliot 131-133). For the teacher and the parent, setting challenges that are in line with the student’s skill is of paramount importance.

One of the errors made by teachers, students and parents alike, is to assess ability by the pieces students play rather than the skills that they possess. It is easy, though not necessarily accurate, to say that because your student was in Volume 5 last year, he should be in Volume 6 this year. It takes more discernment to say that his technical and musicianship levels are at points that allow him to enjoy a flow experience with the piece we have set before him. Using an external standard such as where your student’s pieces come from is not an accurate way of assessing musical readiness. I would suggest that the student’s ability to be in flow with the piece is a better indicator. I occasionally hear something to the effect of “My child enjoys what she is doing, but I wish that she were progressing faster.” The fact that she enjoys what she is doing is probably strong evidence that she is at the right level of challenge to help her to grow in skill and understanding.

In Csikszentmihalyi’s view enjoyable experiences are mindful ones (46). Enjoyment requires the ability to attend, to focus, to discriminate and to analyze. Merely pleasurable experiences have no such requirements.

Pleasure is an important component of the quality of life, but by itself does not bring happiness. Sleep, rest, food [...] provide restorative *homeostatic* experiences that return consciousness to order after the needs of the body intrude and cause psychic entropy to occur. But they do not produce psychological growth. They do not add complexity to the self. Pleasure helps to maintain order, but by itself cannot create new order in consciousness. [...] Enjoyment is characterized by this forward movement: by a sense of novelty, of accomplishment. [...] After an enjoyable event we know that we have changed, that our self has grown: in some respect, we have become more complex as a result of it. [...] A person can feel pleasure without any effort, if the appropriate centers in his brain are electrically stimulated, or as a result of the chemical stimulation of drugs. But it is impossible to enjoy a tennis game, a book, or a conversation unless attention is fully concentrated on the activity (Csikszentmihalyi 46).

C. S. Lewis made a similar point when he described a need pleasure as a pleasure that disappears when satiety is reached (25-29). A pleasure of this type is extinguished when it is experienced. An enjoyment, on the other hand, frequently energizes and causes the participant to seek and anticipate new enjoyments through new challenges. For example, if we are very hungry we may take pleasure in eating a meal. Having satiated our hunger, if we are not capable of conscious enjoyment, we may feel bored. Getting adequate sleep and some diversion from an activity such as television may refresh us so that we are ready for new challenges. Spending an entire weekend sleeping and watching television for hours on end, may leave us feeling irritated rather than refreshed on Monday morning. As Csikszentmihalyi pointed out, while pleasurable experiences may cause us to be rebalanced, they do not give us momentum (46). Hunger may disrupt a wonderfully flowing session of practicing, but having eaten does not by itself get us back into flow – an ordered consciousness is still required. It takes creativity and discipline to enjoy life. If practicing a musical instrument gives us anything valuable, it teaches us the relationship between effort, accomplishment and enjoyment. The act of practicing is a tutorial on enjoying what life has to offer. The benefits of learning to practice go beyond merely acquiring the skill being practiced because a person who learns to face, enjoy, seek

out and meet the challenges of a puzzle, a musical phrase or a math problem, will more likely be able to face and meet the inevitable challenges that one will meet in life. As David Elliot put it:

[...] music making is a unique and major way of gaining self-growth, self-knowledge, and optimal experience, both now and in the future. And to the extent that these values are achieved in and through the development of musicianship, musicing is also a unique and major way of developing self-esteem. For these reasons, music making is something worth learning to do by *all* students. [...] The task of music education is not to develop the various forms of musical knowledge as ends in themselves but to *develop the musicianship of learners through progressive musical problem solving in balanced relation to appropriate musical challenges every step of the way.*[...] it is the balancing or matching of musicianship with carefully selected musical challenges that results in students' self-growth, enjoyment, and self-knowledge. (Elliot 122)

By seeing enjoyment as a discipline, we are at a point to recognize that we have been allowed some control over our own happiness. We can release ourselves from living life in the "if only" mode – that is, *if only* I had more money, *if only* I were more attractive, *if only* I had a more dynamic personality, *if only* people were nicer to me or *if only* I had more talent. If happiness has ties to the ability to order consciousness, then the quality of life is less dependent on external factors such as the mood of our co-workers, the comfort of our environment or whether our favorite television program is on the air. With the development of mindfulness, we gain a sense of control and with it a sense of confidence.

We can now more readily understand Suzuki's vision of music as a tool for change. When we experience flow in our practice sessions, we experience well-being, because our consciousness has been ordered; we experience confidence because we have contributed to our own uniqueness; we experience freedom because having enlivened our mind we will be less prone to being controlled by the vicissitudes of life; we experience enjoyment because we learn how to get more out of every moment in life; we experience power because we are more willing to initiate than to be passive.

With what we have discussed so far we can dispose of the notion that practicing is a present evil to produce a future good. Practicing can be enjoyed now. The flow experience is not an experience of delayed gratification because to experience flow one must be very much in the present. The student is not thinking that practicing will lead to mastery at some future date; he is enjoying the little things that he is mastering now. If the steps that we ask a student to take are too big, we need to

break them into smaller steps before the student experiences anxiety. Being too much concerned with the future – worrying about when we graduate Volume 2 or why he's been on this piece forever – leads to a sense of discontent with what one is presently doing and breaks up flow. Being driven by an agenda rather than enjoying the learning of a new skill breaks up flow. If we come into a practice session with a huge list of objectives, we will feel frustration if we are not on track to accomplish them all. Our students will pick up on this frustration. If we learn to focus on the task at hand and concentrate on this task, heedless of the next thing to do, we are more likely to enjoy flow.

What should "flowing" practices generate?

- **Focus.** As a student learns to practice well, his ability to concentrate on the task at hand will improve.
- **Ease.** As the skill level matches or surpasses the challenge, anxiety should be reduced and a sense of ease should grow.
- **Clarity.** If the musical order of your mind has improved, you should demonstrate this in the clarity of what you are projecting. Notice "obvious" a great performance can seem.
- **Depth and detail.** With clarity should come a greater sense of detail, not for detail sake but as a result of knowing how details fit into the whole.
- **Enjoyment.** A student should feel a sense of accomplishment.

So how do we help our students get into their practicing?

- **Have clear goals.** It is easier to give attention to a task, if you know what the goals of the task are and when success has been achieved (Csikszentmihalyi 54-56). Make sure that your student knows what the goal of his practice is. We all want our students to take on higher musical challenges as their skills grow. So does the student. Where conflict occurs is in defining what a higher musical challenge is. A student may only think that a higher challenge is to play a later piece in a more advanced book. The teacher may think that a higher challenge is to play with a better sound or with greater ease and fluidity. If the student does not understand the challenges in an assignment, he may think that the teacher is simply holding him back. A teacher asking a student to change a fingering or to play with better balance between the hands may cause the student to temporarily lose mastery of a challenge that he understands – playing the right notes. The student needs to understand that what is being asked requires the cultivation of new skills. When we review

old pieces we need to set new challenges because if review is merely repeating the piece, it will be boring. The opportunities for setting up challenges are endless. How slowly can you play a passage? How many places can you quickly start from? How many accurate repetitions can you do in a row? Challenges, used rightly, can help a student get into the state of flow.

- **Have attainable goals.** Make sure that the goals you set for your student's practice session are within the student's ability and within the student's tolerance for frustration. The flow experience feeds off positive input, and nothing is more positive than succeeding at a task. If your student just doesn't seem to be getting the hang of a musical challenge, the solution is not to practice more; it's to find a more reasonable challenge. When parents and teachers set up practice sessions, they need to be sure that the student will have a sense of accomplishment at the end of the session.
- **Focus on one thing at a time.** Concentrate on what you're doing now and take the time to make sure that your student understands what is to be accomplished. Then take the time to carefully work on the task and celebrate when the task has been accomplished. Don't think about what needs to be done next, concentrate on what needs to be done now.
- **Get your student to be pleased with his work.** Nothing encourages more than success. Help your student to know when she has accomplished something – the ability to recognize when one has done well needs to be trained. As she begins to understand the goals of her practicing, ask for her opinion of how things went – especially on what went well.
- **Have a measurable goal.** Csikszentmihalyi pointed out that games are enjoyable because they are designed to be flow activities (72-74). When you think about it anything that tracks success is a type of game. Keep track of successful repetitions. Use a metronome to objectively show how velocity has increased or how a goal tempo is being approached. Games or competitions are valuable because when properly used, they can train your students to see progress.

With every new meeting of a challenge, a person adds to his personal history, cultivates skills that enlarge his sphere of competence and in the process becomes more unique. If this person can successfully harmonize these new experiences with what he already knows, he will experience growth (Csikszentmihalyi 41-42). A person who has integrated a wide

variety of skills, knowledge and experiences will usually find enjoyment with a wider variety of situations and people.

In Jane Austen's novel, Mansfield Park, the heroine of the novel, Fanny Price is walking in a garden with her friend Mary Crawford (162-163). The beauties of the garden enrapture Miss Price while Miss Crawford is inattentive to them (163-164). The implication here is that Miss Price has a richer life because she can enjoy the beauties, complexities and curiosities that surround us all. Money, social class and position cannot give to a person what the life-long learner has. The double gift of the study of music is that it allows us direct contact with a powerful and evocative art form while training us so that we might be more conscious of the richness of life that surrounds us.

Works Cited:

Austen, Jane. Mansfield Park. New York: Signet Classics, 1964.

Brown, Marc. Lyrics from liner notes. "Arthur vs. the piano." Arthur and Friends. WBGH Foundation and CINAR Films, 1998.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990.

Elliot, David J. Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education. Oxford, Eng.: Oxford UP, 1995.

Lewis, C.S. The Four Loves. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960.



ASTEC Chamber Students Play World Premier of *Funny Words*

By Pat D'Ercole

Each January ASTEC sponsors a Festive Weekend of Chamber Music for 11-14 year olds who are nominated by their teachers for this experience. Students are grouped by age and ability into string quartets, piano trios etc. They receive their parts by the end of the first semester and learn them individually, meeting the rest of their group for the first time during Chamber Music Weekend. The weekend includes 3 rehearsals, an enrichment class (such as conducting, ear training, dictation etc.) and a recital. We, as faculty, are always amazed by the transformation that happens between Friday at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday at 3:30!

This year's chamber music weekend was very special in many ways. Not only did we hear many fine performances, but in addition, two of the groups performed the world premier of a work written by ASTEC alum **Abbie Betinis** and commissioned by ASTEC and the American Suzuki Foundation.

The 4-movement work, entitled *Funny Words*, was written for three violins and piano, and was dedicated to Margery Aber. The organization of the piece is based on word games such as the palindrome, anagram and a tongue twister.

Abbie Betinis studied piano with **Ann Marie Novak** and attended St. Olaf College where she majored in composition. She also won a scholarship to study composition abroad at La Scholare Cantorum in France and has been interviewed on Minnesota Public Radio about her annual Christmas carol composition. She is currently working on her master's degree at University of Minnesota.

The students had the opportunity to work with Ms. Betinis in rehearsal. At the recital she gave us additional insights into the inspiration of her work. She was very pleased with the performance given by the two chamber groups that performed her piece and wrote afterward, "I was just transferring the recording I got onto CD and was thinking again about how much fun it was to be on the other side of the Michelsen stage, and to be listening to those really talented players. I hope they had a good time." I think I can speak for players and audience alike in saying, "Thanks, Abbie! We did!"

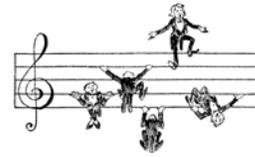


Matt Ziehr Gives Senior Recital

Matt Ziehr, violin, will be giving a senior recital at 2:00 pm, Sunday, February 2nd in Michelsen Hall. He will be assisted by Ross Moore, violin, and David Becker, piano. The program will include Violin Concerto No. 1 in g minor by Max Bruch, Zapateado by Pablo de Sarasate, and Partita No. 3 in E Major, Preludio by Bach. Ross Moore will join him for two duets arranged by Michael McLean: Hungarian Dance No. 1 by Brahms, and Sicilienne by Faure.

Matt, a senior at SPASH, is the son of Bill and Jill Ziehr. He has been a student of Kyoko Fuller since he was five years old, and is currently the concertmaster of the SPASH orchestra. He plays violin in the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra and the Central State Chamber Orchestra, and is in two quartets – he plays the violin in a quartet at SPASH, and plays the viola in a Suzuki quartet.

Matt's other interests include cross country, track, biking, skiing, and participating in Science Club at school. He plans to go on to study biology or chemistry in college.



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

Get out your calendars and start planning.

Because there will be no viola marathons on the regular days in January or February, I have scheduled a special marathon on **February 1**. Please let me know if you can come as I have promised to teach and bring cookies if four students tell me that they are going to attend the before cookie break part. So far I know that three students are planning to come.

Lyndi Benz Dean and **Sarah Zahn** will present a joint Suzuki senior viola recital on **February 9** at 7:30 pm in Michelsen Hall. The program will include works by J.C. Bach, W. F. Bach, Haydn and Telemann. You are all encouraged to attend and enjoy this wonderful viola music. Following the recital everyone is invited to a reception on the Mezzanine right outside Michelsen Hall.

Lessons for Mrs. Martz's students are cancelled during the week of **February 17-21**, as I will be teaching in Puerto Rico at that time. Just as a reminder, you have already had the make up for that lesson.



Notes from the Endpin

By Lawrence Leviton

I hope you had a happy holiday season. Cello Day 2003 is right around the corner on February 9th. Again, we are going to have an exciting day of cello choir playing, master classes, techniques classes and fun cello activities. Our guest clinician this year is Marc Johnson, who is a wonderful performer and teacher. Mr. Johnson plays in the world famous Vermeer String Quartet. He also teaches cello at Northern Illinois University. He is a great teacher and performer and I am delighted that he will be able to be our guest for the day. Here is a schedule of the day's events:

9:30-10-Registration in the Fine Arts building courtyard
 10-10:50-Cello Choir Rehearsal One
 11-12-Master Class-Techniques Class
 12-12:45-Lunch
 12:45-1:45-String Quartet Coachings with Marc Johnson
 1:45-2:45-Master Class
 2:45-3:45-Clinic-How to prepare for Solo and Ensemble and College Auditions
 3:45-4:30-Touch up rehearsal
 4:30 -Gala Final Concert

All of the sessions will be taking place in the UWSP Fine Arts building and are open to the general public.



Student News

Maddie DeBot and **Katie Munck** were strolling violinists for the Italian-themed St. Michael's Foundation Evening of Elegance on November 16th. They also played together for the United Way celebration on December 4th at Sentry World.

Eric Christensen made the finals of the Madison Symphony Young Artist Competition.

Travis Slattery will be having his senior recital on February 23, 2003 at 2:00 pm.

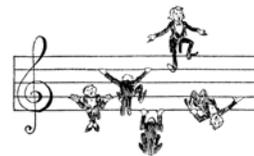
The following students participated in the Chamber Music Weekend, January 17-18, 2003: **Liana Schreiber**, **Kelly Rolak**, **Jonathan Karbowski**, **Maria Marchel**, **Lawrence Andersen**, **Navneeth Iyengar**, **Christopher Droske**, **Spencer Millican**, **Parisa Vaezzadeh**, **Gabriel Krueger**, **Ben Karbowski**, **Petrea Schedgick**, **Nakisa Vaezzadeh**, **Brynn Rathjen**, **Gretchen Sands**, **Kelsey Christensen**, **Roy Meyer**, **Ami Yamamoto**, and **Jane Mitchell**.



December, 2002 Graduates

Forest Passineau, Violin, Book 7
Will Mitchell, Violin, Book 4
Alexander Reeser, Violin, Book 1
Liana Schreiber, Piano, Book 4
Dawn Passineau, Piano, Book 3

Benjamin Rall, Piano, Twinkle
Michael Crump, Violin, Book 3
Rachel Thames, Violin, Twinkle
Wyatt Dittburner, Violin, Book 8



January, 2003 Graduates

Evelyn Andersen, Violin, Book 8
Lawrence Andersen, Violin, Book 5
Michael DeBot, Violin, Twinkle
Craig Felt, Violin, Twinkle
Christa Spieth, Violin, Book 1
James Banovetz, Cello, Book 1
Margot DeBot, Cello, Book 1
Peter Munck, Cello, Book 1
Will Mitchell, Cello, Book 1
William Luetmer, Cello, Book 1
Quinn O'Reilly, Violin, Book 5
Lindsey Mocadlo, Violin, Book 3
Jane Mitchell, Violin, Book 10
Jonathan Kamps, Viola, Book 4
Patricia Wu, Violin, Book 5
William Peck, Viola, Book 3



Upcoming Events

February 15, 2003, **Marathon Saturday**

February 16, 2003, **Solo Recitals**, 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

February 22, 2003, **CWSO** featuring the Monteverdi Master Chorale and Soloists, 7:30 pm, Sentry Theater. For ticket information, call 715-346-4100.

February 23, 2003, **CWSO** featuring the Monteverdi Master Chorale and Soloists, 4:00 pm Wisconsin Rapids Performing Arts Center. For ticket information, call 715-346-4100.

March 8, 2003, **Marathon Saturday**

March 9, 2003, **Solo Recitals**, 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm, **UC Alumni Room**