

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*

April 2004

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

Reading Nurtured By Love by Shinichi Suzuki gives us insight into what happened in his environment that led over time to the development of the Suzuki educational philosophy and approach to teaching the violin. In this book he shares many experiences but in my most recent reading of the book I was once again struck by the way that Suzuki began to play the violin.

"It must have been before I graduated from commercial college. Unexpectedly we got a gramophone. It was not electric, like the modern ones, but had to be wound by hand, and it had a horn as a loudspeaker. This horn was shaped like a morning glory and was big enough for a child to put his head inside. The first record I bought was Schubert's "Ave Maria" played by Mischa Elman. The sweetness of the sound of Elman's violin utterly enthralled me. His velvety tone as he played the melody was like something in a dream. It made a tremendous impression on me. To think that the violin, which I had considered a toy, could produce such beauty of tone!

Elman's "Ave Maria" opened my eyes to music. I had no idea why my soul was so moved. But at least I had already developed the ability to appreciate this beauty. ...I brought a violin home from the factory, and listening to Elman playing a Haydn Minuet, I tried to imitate him. I had no score, and simply moved the bow, trying to play what I heard. Day after day I did this, trying to master the piece. My completely self-taught technique was more scraping than anything else but somehow I finally got so I could play the piece..... Eventually I got so I derived great comfort from playing the violin...." (Suzuki: Nurtured by Love pgs 78-79)

Several things came together at this time for Shinichi Suzuki that changed his life and eventually ours. 1) His father owned a violin factory so that even though Suzuki did not play the violin he had ready access to the instrument. 2) His family acquired a gramophone. 3) For some reason the first recording he purchased was of

violinist Mischa Elman. 4) Hearing Mischa Elman play Ave Maria touched Suzuki's heart so much that with incredible determination he taught himself to play the violin.

I suggest you read more of Nurtured by Love to learn of his life philosophy and the development of Talent Education as well as a few more biographical details. The confluence of experiences that eventually lead to his approach to teaching children is remarkable. Through this book the words directly from Dr. Suzuki can touch our hearts and change our lives.



A Drive to Learn

By Tom Yang

On September 11, 2003, Jenni and I were given the privilege of sharing our lives with a daughter, Olivia. Since then I have come to see three undeniable facts. First, our daughter is unbelievably cute. Second, the people that have surrounded our lives have been wonderfully generous, kind and supportive. Finally, Olivia has a powerful drive to learn. Curiosity and discovery seems to fill her life. When she is on the changing table, her hands explore the texture of the paint on the wall. When holding a favorite stuffed animal, she strokes the label on the toy again and again as if it were an addictive sensation. When she is being fed, her eyes and head dart about the room taking in as many sights as she can. A new person introduced to her is often the object of intense scrutiny before she reacts to him. When a different piece of music starts on our CD player, she will look up from eating. Normally responsive to my voice, when absorbed in an activity of interest to her, she will be oblivious to my efforts to getting her attention (a trait my wife claims that she got from me). My daughter, like many other children, is an ardent student. Concentration and learning at this point in her life are effortless for her.

She seems to drink in everything about her. The challenge is not to induce her to learn but to avoid interfering with her learning.

In her book The Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori described this drive to learn and posited it to be present in all children (7, 83-84). Montessori (1870-1952) was a physician and a pioneer in education. Her ideas of the importance of education in early childhood, the hunger children have to learn, the role that environment plays in learning and the miracle of language acquirement run remarkably parallel to the Suzuki philosophy. Montessori wrote from the perspective of a scientist and reflected an interest in the mechanisms of early childhood development and education. Her writings are of interest to the Suzuki teacher or parent because the scientific nature of her observations brings concreteness to of some of Suzuki's ideas.

Montessori thought that learning in early childhood was a different experience than learning as an adult:

It may be said that we acquire knowledge by using our minds; but the child absorbs knowledge directly into his psychic life. Simply by continuing to live, the child learns to speak his native tongue. A kind of mental chemistry goes on within him. We, by contrast, are recipients. Impressions pour into us and we store them in our minds; but we ourselves remain apart from them, just as a vase keeps separate from the water it contains. Instead the child undergoes a transformation. Impressions do not merely enter his mind; they form it. (25)

Like Suzuki, Montessori was struck by the fact that every child learns the language of his environment regardless of its complexity or whether it is even consistent (111-112):

The differences between masculine and feminine, singular and plural, between tenses and moods, prefixes and suffixes are all applied in the children's speech. The tongue may be complex, have many exceptions to the rules, and yet the child who absorbs it learns it as a whole [...]. (111)

Montessori went on to compare a child's acquisition of language with the taking of a photograph – no matter how complicated or simple the subject is, the camera captures its image with ease (112).

[...] the photographic image becomes imprinted on the plate in total darkness; the developing process is also done in the dark; it is fixed in the

dark, and then only can it be shown in the open. But by that time, it has become unalterable.

So with the child's psychic mechanism of learning a language. Its work begins in the deepest shadows of the unconscious mind; there it is developed and the product becomes fixed. Then only does it appear in the open. Beyond question, there is some mechanism at work causing all this to happen. (Montessori, 112-113)

She continues by saying that in the acquisition of language, a child does a lot of work that cannot be observed:

The quantity of inner work may be immense, yet the outer signs of it are often small. This means there is a great disproportion between the powers of expression and the inner work the child is doing. It is also found that visible progress does not go gradually, but in jumps. At a certain time, for example, the power to pronounce syllables appears, and then for months the child utters only syllables. *Externally, he seems to be making no progress, but all of the sudden, he says a word. Then, for a long time, he uses only one or two words, and seems discouragingly slow to go any further* [emphasis added]. [...] There is no smooth and slow advance, word by word, but here also we find explosive phenomena – as psychologists call them – which are not provoked by any teacher's action, but occur of themselves for no apparent reason. Every child, at a particular period of his life, bursts out with a number of words all perfectly pronounced. Within a space of three months, the child who was almost dumb, learns to use easily all the varied forms of the noun, suffixes, prefixes and verbs. And, in every child, all this occurs at the end of the second year of his life. (Montessori, 113-114)

To summarize, in acquiring the "mother tongue," a child does so accurately and completely without regard to the complexity of the language and without the help of a teacher. The linguistic environment seems to be the determining factor in what children absorb. The absorption of information frequently appears passive, with no external evidence that something is going on. Further, Montessori described "sensitive periods" where it is critical to take in language if language ability is to develop (Lillard, 34). During certain "sensitive periods" language is learned eagerly and without any apparent effort (Montessori, 174-175). Having been surrounded by their native language, children become highly motivated to develop their ability in this language (Montessori, 122-123). For those of us who hold to the validity of Suzuki's

modeling of music education after language acquisition, this implies that when a child is immersed in a musically rich environment, the student will naturally absorb the information and *seek* to master it.

Some implications to consider:

- When a child seems to be making no observable progress in language something within the child might be in the process of being rearranged or reordered to prepare for the next step. I suspect that something akin to this happens in music. A child who seems to make no progress at all suddenly jumps forward. Another child may perform with some nuances of musical style without the benefit of any instruction. The lack of observable evidence for growth does not mean that something is not happening.
- The content of the environment in early childhood is a critical component of a child's musicality. This is not to say that it doesn't matter what teacher you get, it does. But the development of musicality is more a result of having been immersed in a music-filled environment rather than having a great teacher. A child speaks his mother tongue without accent from having been immersed in the language all day long. A musician plays a phrase "without accent" by having heard the music performed by great performers. Children *will* learn from their environment. It is up to the parents and teachers to determine the content of the environment that they learn from.
- Listening must form the foundation for effective practicing. In the mechanism described by Montessori, children work furiously at language mastery because they have inwardly absorbed a basic structure (Montessori, 122-123, 174-175). When this basic structure has been absorbed, they feel a compulsion to practice. Frequently, we view the mastery of the musical language as a conditional relationship -- first you practice then you gain musicality. If we follow the language acquisition model described by Montessori, you must be immersed in music before you can effectively practice it. Without an inner musicality, practicing will be aimless because there is no internal guide and without this internal guide, there is no internal motivation. It is this interior musicality that is the deepest motivation for practicing. My own motivation, as a fairly advanced pianist stems directly from having an aural ideal and trying to meet that

ideal. This ideal is a powerful motivation to practice. As a student I frequently stayed up to practice after my teacher's concerts, because I had a sound ideal in my head.

- Modeling rather than giving instructions are important. When I want a student to play with more flow, I don't give a series of instructions, I play the passage and have the student listen or I play the passage with the student. Montessori pointed out that when a child is about one year of age he has ideas to express but has not developed the capacity to do so and at this point needs models for enunciation (122-123).

A person trying to express himself is badly in need of a teacher to enunciate the words for him very distinctly. [...] Our usual habit, instead, is to do nothing. We just imitate the child's babbling ourselves and, were it not that he has an inner teacher of his own, he would be unable to learn. It is this teacher who makes him listen to grownups talking to one another, even when they are not thinking about him. (Montessori, 123)

- Teaching should not get in the way of learning. Things that are discovered and learned by a child are things that a child will remember. We must not be so caught up in teaching that we don't allow space for the child to learn. Some of the most effective teachers in the Suzuki Method use the fewest words. Words frequently create control issues, because the teacher is initiating and controlling the student's learning experience instead of allowing the student a sense of control through the exercising of his powers of learning and observation.

When the child begins to show interest [...] the teacher must not interrupt, because this interest corresponds with natural laws and opens up a whole cycle of new activities. [...] The child's interest is not only focused on the operation itself, but more often it is based on his wish to *overcome the difficulty* [emphasis hers]. "If the teacher wants to overcome it instead of me, let her. I am no longer interested." That is his attitude. (Montessori, 279-280)

The implication here is that we may need to focus less on getting a desired behavior and more on getting the child to see and figure things out by himself. Setting up challenges

("How will you solve this?") instead of dictating what to do encourages independent problem solving rather than mere mimicry. Where Montessori advocated limiting instruction to avoid infringing on a child's freedom (Lillard, 65), Suzuki advocated "one point" lessons and practice sessions where a large portion of a child's home practice is devoted to reviewing the familiar. Reviewing allows the student opportunities to gain independence, strength and mastery because having already learned the piece and having an idea of what the piece is about, he is afforded the opportunity to explore the piece more deeply on *his own*. Learning new pieces requires instruction which if not carefully given can lead to loss of motivation (Montessori, 279-280). For this reason, Montessori, like Suzuki, advocated the careful control of introducing new material so as to confine the giving of instructions to where it is absolutely necessary (Lillard, 65).

- We need to evaluate the success of a learning experience in terms of how engaged a child is rather how he performs. If a child is appropriately engaged, positive things are probably happening. Aiming for results is not conducive to growth; rather, results naturally happen when the student is engaged. "*The essential thing is for the task to arouse such an interest that it engages the child's whole personality* [emphasis hers]" (Montessori, 206).

It is now spring and even in glacial Wisconsin there are signs that winter may actually come to a close. Those of us who are gardeners begin to feel the call to seed and soil. Helping your child acquire the language of music is like gardening – it is an act of nurture and faith. We cannot force a seed to grow, we can only provide a safe, secure and consistent environment (good growing conditions) and faithfully water. We wait patiently when we don't see results because we believe that something unseen is happening – and as every gardener knows, this patient anticipation only augments the joy we feel when something does pop up.

Works Cited:

Lillard, Paula Polk. Montessori: A Modern Approach. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.

Montessori, Maria. The Absorbent Mind (with new foreword by John Chattin McNichols). New York: Owl Books, Henry Holt and Company, 1995.



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

This year the ASTEC Voice and String Festival Concert will be on April 25 with rehearsal at the Marathon on April 24. All viola students who plan to perform in the concert need to participate in the rehearsal on Saturday. We will start as usual at 9:00 and at that time we will rehearse in room A-205 upstairs in the College of Fine Arts Building. All violists should plan to stay after cookie break for the logistics rehearsal in Michelsen with the entire group. That should be finished by 11:30. The violists playing in Book 4 and 5 should plan to stay after that to rehearse the Telemann and the Marcello movements.

We will be performing the following pieces:
Violas and singers--Zena, Zena,

Violas alone--Marcello: 2nd movement, Telemann: single first movement, Von Weber: Hunter's chorus, Bach Minuet 1 and Song of the Wind.

Violas and cellos--May song
Violin, viola and cello--Happy Farmer

Strings and voice--Lightly Row and Twinkles



Notes from the Endpin

By Lawrence Leviton

Spring is here and with this exciting season comes our big playing event of the year, the Festival Concert. This year's concert takes place on April 25th, just a few short weeks away. Here's the list of pieces we'll be playing:

Brahms Hungarian Rhapsody no. 5-Arr. Carrie Gruselle
Lully –Gavotte
Bourree-Handel
Minuet No. 2-Bach
May Song-Nordstrom-Arr.
French Folk Song-Nordstrom-Arr.
Twinkle Variation One

I'd like you to cover these every day in your home review:

Please see me if you are not sure what pieces you are playing.



2004 American Suzuki Institute

If you are interested in attending the 2004 American Suzuki Institute, **apply now!** Applications are accepted in the order they are received and enrollment is limited. Some classes were filled in mid-April last year, and they seem to fill earlier each year.

Your ASTEC teacher has a supply of brochures, you can stop by our office in Room 004 to pick one up, or you can print the brochure from our website: www.uwsp.edu/cofac/suzuki.



Student News

Brad Hessler, Jamie Davis and Emily Gruselle made it into the state Honors Orchestra.

Anna Kreuger, Peter Kreuger, Jane Mitchell, and Lawrence Andersen, as well as UWSP Suzuki graduate students, Eunice Cordero de Paz, Emily Watson, and Heidi Corcoran and faculty member, Pat D'Ercole were all members of the Waupaca Fine Arts Festival Civic Orchestra which accompanied the Community Choir in Leavitt's *Requiem* and Rutter's *Magnificat*.

On February 14, **Sam Sheibley** performed his Book 1 graduation recital.

On February 21, **Ann Tillotson** performed her Book 1 graduation recital.

ASTEC Students to Perform at SAA Conference

Jonathan Kamps was chosen to play in the viola section of the Suzuki Youth Orchestra of the Americas 2004 at the Suzuki Association of the Americas 11th Conference which will be held in Minneapolis May 28-31. Jane Mitchell and Katherine Munck were also selected to perform on a viola master class which will be taught by Peter Slowik, Professor of Viola and director of the Strings Division at Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Also students participating at the SAA Conference were chosen on the basis of a video taped audition. Congratulations to Jonathan, Jane and Katherine.



Congratulations!!

Congratulations to those in the ASTEC family who participated in the recent district auditions for WSMA and WMTA. The performances of our students were very successful, with ten different students receiving awards for distinction at WSMA and almost 90% of the eligible state track students successfully qualifying at WMTA.

Kayla Provisor, Abby Erdman, Sheila Lais, Michael LeGault, Melissa Zanotelli, Matt Leifheit, Kate Leifheit, Karl Spaay, John Zach, Lisa Slattery, Hillary Anderson, Megan Otte, Allie Jagielo, Lydia Anderson, Soren Anderson, Allison Boyle, Emmalee Boyle, Zachary Forster, Jordan Hornung, Zachary Markman, Zara Markman, Gwynna Norton, Erik O'Reilly, Dawn Passineau, Abigail Scaffidi, Alex Scaffidi, Liana Schreiber, Ann Tillotson, Kelly Tillotson, David Cecil, Emily Gruselle, Ethan McKnight Jesse Nummelin, Chris Peck, James Banovetz, Peter Munck, Christopher Marion, Kelley Rolak, Christopher Patchett, Maddie DeBot, Navneeth Iyengar, Ann Marie Kosmoski, Lawrence Andersen, Evelyn Andersen, Natalie Olson, Brittany Holz, Callie Stanislawski, Callie Janik, Emily Janik, Emily Seegert, Emily Karbowski, Aaron Bauer, James Smyth, Daniel Smyth, Brynn Johnson, Julida Kochanowski, Kelsey Christensen, Jill Iwanski, Anna Luetmer, Jane Mitchell, Katherine Munck, Quinn O'Reilly, Adam Outaishat, Andrew Wu, Michael Crump, Sally DeBauche, Harry DeBauche, Chris Droske, Brad Hessler and Will Peck



Faculty News

On February 7, **Tom Yang** was a guest clinician for the Columbia Talent Education Association in Columbia, Missouri.

On April 18, **Tom Yang** will be assisting Dave Story in Bass Recital. The performance will take place at 7:30 in Michelsen Hall.

Dee Martz attended the Suzuki Association Board of Directors meeting in Boulder, Co March 25-28. She is almost midway through her term as Board Secretary. Mrs. Martz currently serves as secretary of the SAA Board.



March 2004 Graduates

Annie Yao, Violin Book 1
Brian Turner, Violin Book 1
Aaron Bauer, Piano Book 4
Callie Stanislawski, Piano Book 4
Brittany Holz, Piano Book 1
Patricia Wu, Violin Book 6
Hannah Buehler, Violin Book 5
Anna Luetmer, Violin Book 9
Walker Guzowski, Piano Book 1
Jordan Hornung, Piano Book 2
Navneeth Iyengar, Violin Book 4
McLean DeBot, Violin Book 2
Will Peck, Viola Book 4



Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 3rd, Piano Marathon

Sunday, April 4th, Solo Recital, 2:00 and 3:30 pm,
Michelsen Hall

Saturday, April 24th, Marathon Saturday (except piano)

Sunday, April 25th, Voice & String Festival Concert, Ben
Franklin Jr. High School Auditorium, 2:00 pm

Saturday, May 8th, Ensemble & Solo Recital, 2:00 and
3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

Saturday, May 8th, CSCO Concert, 7:30 pm, Michelsen
Hall

Sunday, May 9th, Piano Festival Concert, Michelsen Hall



Marathon Schedule and Location

April 3 (Piano only) *

A204 (11:00 – 2:00)

A202 (11:00 – 2:00)

April 24

CSCO - A201 (9:00 – 10:15)

Violins - Michelsen (9:00 – 12:00)

Cellos - A202 (9:00 – 12:00)

Violas - A205 (9:00 – 12:00)

Voice - A206 (9:00 – 10:30)

* Piano students - please check with your teacher for
your specific time and classroom assignment.



HAPPY **S**PRING!

