

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*

March 2004

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

The Ambassador frequently includes mention of the Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA.) Members of the ASTEC faculty attend SAA Conferences, serve on committees and have been elected to the Board of Directors. Students have been selected to perform at SAA Conferences and the American Suzuki Institute is "approved" by the SAA.

But what exactly is the SAA?

The simple answer is that the SAA is a 501c.3 organization that guides and supports the work of Dr. Suzuki throughout the Americas. The following material, taken from the SAA website (www.suzukiassociation.org) will give you a broader understanding of the scope of the SAA.

"The Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA) is a coalition of teachers, parents, educators, and others who are interested in making music education available to all children. The SAA provides programs and services to members throughout North and South America. With the International Suzuki Association (ISA) and other regional associations, the SAA promotes and supports the spread of Dr. Suzuki's Talent Education.

What are some of the SAA's programs and services?

Teacher Development Program. Opportunities for structured training in the Suzuki philosophy and approach. The SAA has approved training available from registered Teacher Trainers in violin, viola, cello, bass, piano, flute, recorder, guitar, and harp.

Scholarship program. Scholarships available to assist teachers attending SAA-approved short-term training at week-long summer institutes and long-term training programs at colleges and universities.

American Suzuki Journal. Quarterly publication with stimulating ideas and information for teachers, parents, and others. Includes regular columns with specific ideas for teaching particular instruments and for parenting in the Suzuki context.

Registry Program. Registration of SAA-approved training courses completed by active members.

Teacher Location. Service for parents and programs seeking teachers.

Conferences/Retreats. Meetings featuring master classes, inspiring programs, and opportunities for teachers and parents to share ideas. Special sessions for institute directors and leaders of state and regional associations.

Summer Student Workshops. Approved summer classes at institutes across the country. Opportunities for students and families to participate in Suzuki classes and enrichment courses that motivate and inspire.

Organizational Support. Assistance and networking for regional organizations of parents and/or teachers.

Resource Materials. Access to library of audio and video tapes, research information, etc.

Insurance. Group programs for health and instrument insurance.

According to the mission statement the SAA "aspires to improve the quality of life in the Americas through Suzuki education." Additionally it "seeks to create a learning community which embraces excellence and nurtures the human spirit."

I am pleased to note that quite a few ASTEC families are members of the SAA. However as a not for profit membership organization the SAA not only depends on the volunteer work of its membership but it also depends on donations to meet its goals. As the current secretary of the SAA Board of Directors I am eager to speak with any of you who would like information on how to help the SAA meet its mission.



Seven A's for Excellence

By Kyoko Fuller

1. Attraction

I often hear students say "Oh boy, I get to learn how to play *this* song. It is my favorite!" Most students are delighted to move on to a new piece; however, each student has his/her favorite piece to play. It is interesting to observe the difference between how students play their favorite pieces and how they play pieces that are simply assigned to them. When playing a favorite piece, the students play with great feeling and enthusiasm. In witnessing this difference, we see that the language of music has to come from the heart.

Some pieces attract the attention of the student immediately, but others require more time for students to appreciate. But in either case, a student's attraction towards a piece stimulates the inner musicality and understanding.

Dr. Suzuki observed that the traditional method of teaching scales and etudes only worked with a limited number of students. That is why he used the power of musical attraction to ignite students' learning ability. He established his method with wonderful collections of REAL music throughout the course of his method.

Attraction motivates any one to learn more. This is true in my own life. When I need to learn music that is not exactly my favorite, it is ten times harder to motivate myself to practice it. What then helps me is to find out how other musicians play it. I look for the things in the music that reveal their attraction to it, such as wonderful technique, phrasings, beautiful tone and special interpretations of the music that could convince me to pursue playing it. It usually works well. Students also need to be inspired and excited about music in order to learn and play it with excellence.

2. Attention

Attention is the mother of motivation. When attention is there, the mind begins to activate toward the completion of tasks. Curiosity also works to feed the mind with fascination. If students are not motivated, it is most likely due to lack of attention. I've seen among students and parents an incredible transformation in their attitudes when students are assigned to play in a recital. Suddenly their attention to the lesson and practice becomes top priority. Then they pay attention to what needs to be done for a good performance. Their serious attention and the supporting actions make real improvements that encourage both parent and student to keep going on. It was amazing what they could do when they paid attention seriously!

Some students have been trained to have consistent attention in learning regardless of whether they have a recital or not and become excellent learners. That comes from inner values and integrity. Because their experience is joyous, they can overcome unsuccessful experiences without quickly becoming discouraged.

3. Accuracy

Studying stringed instruments, you have to work for accurate intonation as well as correct rhythm and tempo. For violin, viola and cello, accuracy with intonation means your fingers have to find a spot not much larger than the size of a needle point. And fingers must be trained to land on those spots no matter how fast the notes go. It is truly a marvel how any musician can reach that level of skill where fine technique becomes second nature. Without accuracy, music simply becomes unmusical.

When striving for accuracy, Dr. Suzuki's law of ability, "Knowledge times 10,000 times equals ability," applies well. I remember one impressive student performance, a Wisconsin State High School Honors Choir a number of years ago. The director never compromised but kept insisting that they sing in perfect pitch, saying that God has perfect pitch and so He made them to sing in perfect pitch! The result was beautiful harmonies! That reminded me so much of Dr. Suzuki's attitude for his students. He was patient but very determined concerning the student's ability to always reach excellence. If you expect for yourself the highest goals and work towards them, they will come. If you worry about how much pressure that puts on yourself, remember to allow yourself plenty of time since it takes time to play repetitions of 500 or 10,000 times. But the point is to work toward it, humbly and patiently, without compromise. It will be worth it.

4. Anticipation

Anticipation is a part of music that is not seen on the music sheet, but as musicians, we have to learn to read it just the same. It is a kind of inner energy that allows you to make precise decisions about delivering the music. I personally think it is the most important element for a musician to study. I like to compare anticipation to the task of driving a car in a rally race. There is a navigator who studies the map of the racing track and tells a driver what to expect to see on the race track and to prepare to take action before they are seen. The navigator is essential to the driver's ability to face the obstacles and handle the car in a timely and skillful way. Of course, in music, speed is not the goal. But a performer needs a strong sense of navigation, an inner sense of the timing of the music. That is what I mean by anticipation. It guides you to play from note to note, rhythm to rhythm, phrase to phrase and one technique to other technique as the music

covers the territory of its musical space. Without anticipation, you will likely have tempo problems, becoming too fast or slowing down without even noticing that something has changed in the music. And then along the way you will find the unexpected crashes.

When we get nervous we often stop listening to our inner navigator and the playing goes on without any clear sense of direction or timing. The car keeps moving, but like going down a hill without any brakes. We lose all sense of security and the only sense we feel is one of danger! Becoming stronger in your sense of anticipation will most likely help you maintain composure and may even reduce nervousness.

The great violinist Isaac Stern once said that playing notes is not music, but from note to note is where music lies. Good artists have a great sense of timing and direction in music and they command the inner energy to carry the music from note to note with a sense of direction, which is the where the music gets meaning. Dr. Suzuki urged his students to listen to the great artists for their precision of inner action found between the notes. He called it "MA" which means space. As you strive for excellence, you will develop a profound sense of nuance and expression by learning the unwritten music of anticipation.

5. Athleticism

It is so exciting to watch great athletes, not just to see them win, but to watch their great skills in action. There is coordination, strength and amazing speed, all under a control that is so artistic. It is all too obvious that such refined abilities cannot be developed without extensive training of the muscles, both for strength and for finely detailed skills.

When I watch and listen to great musical artists, I am often struck by the athletic quality of musical performance. They also must have great coordination and that inner skill of pacing that knows how to ration the energy of the body to put so many skills together into one great performance. Muscle coordination is carried out in the arm and finger movements to bring a huge range of dynamics and delicate touches of phrase with incredible accuracy. Also it is fascinating to watch whole body movements that are synchronized so well with the music. In other words, it is a lot more than just moving fingers! Even where the music flows gently and gracefully, and a musician looks completely relaxed, energy flows out from the body, making the performance truly alive.

Some of us are born with the genes of an athlete, while some of us are far less athletic. As musicians, we all need to train the athletic part of musical playing. This begins by keeping our bodies in good health through exercise, developing through a variety of activities body strength and quick coordination in our muscles. As a teacher, I see huge differences in students who are well connected with their own bodies and able to command their muscles. This is especially important for performing accurate rhythms and dynamics. Remember, your body is really a crucial part of your instrument.

For more details on this subject, reread articles in previous Ambassadors by Ann Marie Novak and Mary Hofer. They have given great tips for musical practice and performance that relate to golf and ice skating practice.

6. Articulation

Articulation is known to most students as staccato or accents on the notes but the meaning can also include the clarity of music deliverance. Play in way that brings out the texture of tone, the character of rhythm, the shape of the phrasing and dynamics level, even before you understand musical idea completely. By trying to articulate these things based on how they are written on the music, soon you will have a direction to how music should be played. Did you notice that your tone tends toward dullness when you are sight

reading? It can be a perfect demonstration of non-statement playing because there is no preparation for careful articulation.

Whatever you play, make it convincing to your listeners. Like an actor who exaggerates action and speaking to get the message across the stage to the audience, a musician must take care to emphasize those features that clarify the meaning of the music. That means playing *forte* even louder and *piano* even softer. Identify the differences of tone for heavy or light, bright or sweet. Form phrases into a more convincing shape. Play the rhythm with character, happily, peacefully or madly, but by all means avoid dullness. As you start to do this you will see the form and character of the piece begin to take a more personal form which is the way it should be. You will be involved in the story of music in a greater level and soon that story becomes your own creation too. How exciting it is to play in that manner!

I encourage students to record their playing as often as they can to evaluate their articulation. If it is not coming out clearly, then you may find your audience will be sleepy to hear you. Dr. Suzuki strongly emphasized the importance of listening to the great artists over and over to hear their articulation. You will discover so many interesting ways of articulating the sound of the music by listening to them.

7. Artistry

When the above six *A's* of skills are put into your playing and flow out of your heart, your performance will become an art. Your performance will capture the audience with excitement. Your musicality will combine to create a performance that exceeds the sum of your individual skills. Artistry is always more than the parts because it represents the complete presentation of preparation and skill that comes together on the day of a performance. Artistry enables musicians to present their skills to the audience in a package that always surprises them as a most pleasing and memorable gift!

It is true that each component of musicality will grow in different ways and times, and they do not necessarily come in a balanced way. But however they come, they must be welcomed and appreciated, even if only one step at a time. So, be hopeful, and be encouraged to keep up your practice while keeping these seven elements in mind.



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

On the Viola website there is an interesting if extremely incomplete list of famous people who played the viola. Here are a few of the people mentioned.

J.S.Bach, composer. C.P.E. Bach wrote about his father in a letter to Johann Forkel: "As the greatest expert and judge of harmony, he liked best to play the viola, with appropriate loudness and softness.He understood to perfection the possibilities of all stringed instruments."

Jimi Hendrix, rock guitarist, started his musical career at an early age on the viola according to leaflet in "Jimi Hendrix: The Ultimate Collection."

James Marshall, children's book author, illustrator (George and Martha, Miss Nelson is Missing, Yummers, The Stupids, etc.) - graduate of the New England Conservatory.

John Montgomery (1920-) Ford Foundation Professor of International Relations, emeritus, Harvard University. Director of the Pacific Basin Research Center. Was the Allied officer in charge of the reconstruction of Hiroshima.

W.A. Mozart preferred playing the viola. It's believed that he conducted the premiere of his Sinfonia Concertante for violin and viola as he played the Principal Viola part.

Naruhito, Crown Prince of Japan

Franz Schubert, composer. From the New Grove: It was during Schubert's holidays that a family string quartet was formed, with the composer playing the viola, his brothers Ignaz and Ferdinand the violins, and his father the cello. For this family quartet the early string quartets of 1811-14 were composed.



Notes from the Endpin

By Lawrence Leviton

Cello Day 2004 was a rousing success. On January 31st, Over 40 cellists from around the state participated in a day of Cello related activities. Guest clinician, Matt Turner, led the participants in learning how to improvise on the cello. He led us in some fun exercises that showed us how to generate many original and unique sounds on the cello. The day also included master classes, cello choir rehearsals, and a movie hour where we saw old footage of the remarkable cellists Gregor Piatigorsky and Jacqueline du Pré. Cello Day concluded with a gala performance by the Cello Day Cello Choir.

Thanks to all of the ASTEC cellists who participated in the nursing home performance on February 27th. Your music was greatly appreciated by the residents.



Aber Children's Scholarship Awarded

The American Suzuki Foundation is pleased to announce the 2004 winners of the Aber Children's Scholarship grants. These annual awards, endowed by Margery Aber to honor her parents, are given to families who participate in a competitive selection process established by the Foundation Board.

Families were asked to respond to questions designed to assess their understanding and application of the Suzuki philosophy in their children's musical education and their family lives. The Board Scholarship Committee was very impressed with the quality and creativity of the answers submitted by participating families and enjoyed interviewing selected families for their final decision.

The families receiving scholarships this year are: Kent and Ann Glazer (Morgann), of Plover; Jeff and Gloria Josephson (Michael and Laura), of Marshfield; Ken and Janet Kamps (Jonathan), of Pickett; Jon and Tricia Marion (Bryce), of Marshfield; Bernie and Louise Smyth (Philip, James and Daniel), of Custer; Steve and Jenni Thames (Rachel), of Wisconsin Rapids; Agnes and David Chan (Lucas), of Stevens Point; and Kurt and Nicole Van Tiem (Anthony), of Stevens Point.

The Aber Children's Scholarship has become an integral part of the Foundation's support of ASTEC families and the ASTEC program. The Board would like to encourage all ASTEC families to participate in next year's award program.



2004 American Suzuki Institute

The brochure is out and applications are pouring in! If you are interested in attending the 2004 American Suzuki Institute, **apply early!** 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

Cello Day participants included: **Will Mitchell, Anna Krueger, Jamie Davis, David Cecil, Peter Munck, Emily Gruselle, Jesse Nummelin, and John Bondeson.**

Christopher Marion played a violin solo from Riverdance on Wed. Feb 11 with the Marshfield Senior High Woodwind Ensemble featuring Ed Shaughnessy of the Tonight Show on the drums.

Roy Meyer, Peter Krueger, Katie Munck, Jane Mitchell, Maddie DeBot, David Cecil, Jamie Davis, Maddie DeBot and Peter Krueger performed with the CWSO on February 28th and 29th at Sentry Theater.



Faculty News

Dee Martz was a clinician at the Suzuki Workshop in San Juan, Puerto Rico February 14-16.

Lawrence Leviton will perform the Dvorak Concerto with the UWSP Symphony Orchestra on March 3rd. He also gave performances of the concerto in February at P.J. Jacobs, Ben Franklin, Bannach, and Spash.

Pat D'Ercole presented a violin recital on Feb. 8 at the First Presbyterian Church in Marshfield and on Feb 15 in Michelsen Hall. She was assisted by Ann Marie Novak, Kyoko Fuller and Lawrence Leviton.

Pat also was a clinician for a workshop for the students of Rebecca White in Columbus, Ohio on Feb. 27.

David Becker and Kyoko Fuller performed with the CWSO on February 28th and 29th at Sentry Theater.



February 2004 Graduates

Katie Dahm, Violin Book 6
Alexander Reeser, Violin Book 2
Jonathan Cochrane, Violin Book 1
Christopher Marion, Violin Book 7

Will Mitchell, Violin Book 5
Will Mitchell, Cello Book 2
Peter Munck, Cello Book 2
Trenton Seegert, Cello Twinkle
Ben Karbowski, Violin Book 5
Chloe Mobley, Violin Twinkle



Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 13th, Marathon Saturday

Sunday, March 14th, Solo Recitals, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall, COFA

Saturday, April 3rd, Piano Marathon

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

March 13

CSCO - A201 (9:00 – 10:15)

Pianos* (11:00 – 2:00)

Violins - Michelsen (9:00 – 12:00)

Cellos - A202 (9:00 – 12:00)

Violas - Suzuki House-Room 110 (9:00 – 12:00)

Voice - Suzuki House-Room 107 (9:00 – 10:30)

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.



THINK SPRING!!