



AMBASSADOR

Aber Suzuki Center

University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point
College of Fine Arts and Communication
inspire, create, achieve

November 2009

Upcoming Events

Saturday, November 7, 2009

Music of the Masters
Holiday Inn & Convention Center, Stevens Point
6:00 – 9:00 pm
Tickets available from any Aber Suzuki Center teacher, in the ASC Office, the UWSP Box Office (346-4242), and from American Suzuki Foundation Board Members

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Parent Education Session
“How to Get the Most from Your Lessons”
7:30 pm, NFAC 144

Saturday, November 21, 2009

Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, November 22, 2009

Solo Recitals, 2:00 and 3:30 pm
NFAC Michelsen Hall

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Parent Education Session
“Suzuki, Translating the Philosophy into Reality”
7:30 pm, NFAC 144

Saturday, December 12, 2009

Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, December 13, 2009

Solo Recitals, 2:00 and 3:30 pm
NFAC Michelsen Hall

From the Director's Desk

By Pat D'Ercole, Interim Director

Toward the end of September, ABC's Nightline featured a segment called “Enroll Yourself in the Genius Factory.” (You can still view it on YouTube.) The report was about a book by Don Coyle titled the *Talent Code* in which the author says that talent is not inborn, but made. That statement should sound familiar to Suzuki parents. Dr. Suzuki made the same proclamation 60 years ago. Coyle's brain research shows that there are three ingredients to developing talent:

1. Practice, practice, practice...
2. Great coaching
3. Total concentration

Dr. Suzuki, based on his “research” on his observations of children and similarly identified five ingredients for making talent:

1. An early start
2. A superior environment
3. A commitment to practice
4. A superior instructor
5. A through teaching method

It heartwarming to see Dr. Suzuki's ideas being born out in scientific research especially for those of us old enough to remember a time when this idea was considered absurd. It is also interesting to see that Dr. Suzuki lists an early start and a superior environment as his first two ingredients. Before one can “practice, practice, practice,” one needs to have a desire and a willingness to do so if “total concentration” is to be present. How does one inculcate that motivation? First, by beginning early when children are most eager to imitate their parents and, secondly, by being the role model and providing additional role models to inspire them. Those models can be siblings, friends or professional artists who are music makers. Children learn by example so they need to see those people that they hold in high esteem enjoy music making and music listening.

Like any activity that must be performed daily, it can sometimes be hard to just get started. (That was always my most difficult hurdle.) As parents we need to be creative in devising ways to entice our children to practice. From the responses we've received to our first query for *And the Survey Says...* it seems that ASC parents are up to the task. Please read the column to find out more. You may wish to keep this Ambassador for a reference when you need a fresh idea. Be thinking about ideas to share for next month: "How do you make practice fun?"



CAUTION: When using hand sanitizers, please be sure your hands are completely dry before touching an instrument. Contact between hand sanitizers and an instrument can mar the finish of your instrument.



Again or Not Again? That is the Question

By Tom Yang

Joseph Kaminsky's excellent article in the American Suzuki Journal, "Reaping the Rewards of Repetition" (19-21) gave me a pointed reminder of how important it is to get my students to play repetitions. Though I have always recognized the importance of doing repetitions in my own practice, it has always been something that I've hesitated to impose on my students. Reasons range from not wanting to make practicing seem too onerous to thinking that sophisticated, nuanced teaching is about musicianship rather than telling a student how many times to play a passage. It just doesn't seem very cool to make your students do something over and over again. The fact remains, however, that those who perform often, take repetition very seriously and those who repeat successfully find repeating to be an enriching experience.

I often hear students say that they were able to play the passage "perfectly" at home but circumstances in the studio interfere with their ability to do it at the lesson. This misses the point of practice which is not about having once performed something correctly, but about being able to repeat this success in almost any circumstance. The fact is, repetition is the point of practicing. You practice an action in order that it can be *repeated* at a future time. You practice so that you can *repeat this action* at your will and pleasure. The ability to successfully repeat an action in varied

situations is not only the goal of practicing, it is what allows us to share our art with conviction, eloquence and grace.

Repeating Accurately Is the Friend of Efficiency and Velocity.

Last year I decided that I would try to relearn a Chopin Ballade that I had played almost thirty years ago. I didn't think that it would be possible to play it with the tempos that I did as a younger pianist so I decided to see if I could make the piece convincing at a slower, easier and more comfortable tempo. The slower tempi were not satisfactory so I pushed the tempi and strained to play faster with less than satisfactory results. After reading Kaminsky's article, I started repeating challenging places with more focus on accuracy. This meant that I had to practice slower than I had been doing. To my surprise, I discovered that the slow practicing seemed to help me play faster. In an ABC/Nightline piece by John Donvan entitled "Enroll Yourself in the Genius Factory" it was pointed out that there is scientific evidence for the efficacy of repetition. Repetition seems to cause the thickening of myelin, a coating around nerves ("Enroll Yourself in the Genius Factory"). The piece went on to say that the effect of this enhanced coating allows the nerves to pass information more smoothly and much faster ("Enroll Yourself in the Genius Factory"). Hence one can see how a master of any activity can look at a novice and be almost bewildered at how slowly the novice reacts and responds. It seems plausible that if you repeatedly and accurately present your brain with a well defined sequence of actions, you will begin to anticipate the actions of the sequence, making the sequence seem easier and faster. Accuracy in repetition develops speed because accurate practicing makes clear the sequence of the events. Accurate repetitions reduce the ambiguities that make challenging passages seem more complex and difficult than they really are. If you are not clear whether the passage in question has an F or an F-sharp or if you are not sure what fingering to use, you are adding challenges to your mind's attempt to anticipate what is to come. Playing fast may not be so much about physical development as it is about removing mental ambiguities. Your mind will move very fast once it becomes familiar with exactly what the task is. The object of repeating in practice is to make clear to the mind what task it is to do. Slow careful repetition will help the student to learn to anticipate what is happening in the music which is a key to developing security, confidence and velocity in playing.

Partnering Repetition and Review.

Because accurately repeating a passage of music requires intense concentration, it is important to carefully limit and define what is to be repeated. The passage to be repeated should be short and have clear starting and stopping places. Keeping the passage short allows the student the opportunity to make adjustments while the repetition is fresh in mind. Short practice segments make it possible to do more repetitions and will allow the student a better chance of seeing the effects of his repetition. Clearly defined start and

stop places help the student gain familiarity and recognition of the passage more quickly and has the further benefit of allowing the student to continue work on the passage on a different day. With your teacher's help, break your pieces into small practice segments. Once each passage is mastered, putting them together will be relatively easy if you review the learned passages regularly. One of the goals of a practice session is to practice with more success and less frustration. By making the repeated passages short, you make the chance for success and mastery higher, which teaches your student that practicing *does* work. Working on too much *new* material will lead to frustration, your student could be working very hard and have little to show for it in the long run. Successful practicing is practicing that adds to the student's skill set. This entails adding new skills while maintaining old ones. As the student acquires more repertoire and enlarges his skill set, more of the practice time will be spent reviewing -- revisiting a well-learned piece for maintaining and deepening mastery, gaining new insights (Kaminsky 21) and enjoying the fruits of successful practice. By carefully limiting the introduction of new material and encouraging the review of the old and well-learned, your student can learn manageable amounts of new material while still spending most of her practice time playing well

Repetition and Efficient Learning. By now you may have already asked the question, "How can one learn significant amounts of repertoire if so much time and energy is spent on playing short passages?" which roughly translated can be taken to mean "If it takes two weeks to master (that is to be able to play easily and in almost any circumstance) a four measure segment, will we ever get out of Volume 1?" There are two points to consider in this question. First, if you really master a passage, know it inside out and can play it in almost any circumstance, what you have mastered will be transferable. I tell my students that when they master the Alberti bass in Lightly Row (Vol. 1), they are also preparing to play the opening of Mozart, K. 545 (Vol. 6). When they master the triplet bass figures in Cuckoo (Vol. 1) or Allegretto 1 (Vol. 1) they are working on the triple bass figures in the Beethoven Sonata Op. 49 No.2 (Vol. 4) and the Haydn Sonata, Hob. XVI/35 (Vol. 5). When your teacher assigns short passages to repeat and master, it is to learn a technique that will be utilized again and again. Second, focusing on a small part of a piece facilitates the learning of the whole piece. In French Children's Song (Vol. 1), if a pianist practices measures 9-12, he knows measures 13-16 except for one note in the left hand and one note in the right hand. In Minuet 2 (Vol. 2), mastering measures 1-4 is the equivalent of mastering 30 percent of the piece. The nature of music is that it repeats itself. A student who works to master short sections will more likely recognize repeating musical patterns and be on his way to understanding musical forms. He will therefore be better equipped to approach longer pieces. Further, well-learned skills are skills that last. A student that has mastery over a critical mass of skills will find that much in the new pieces that he encounters will have

been already practiced in music that he has previously learned. In the long run, students who have spent enough time developing critical skills will acquire more music, with less frustration and in less time than students who only work to get to the next piece.

The Math of Repetition -- Why Games and Scorekeeping Are Important.

In his article, Kaminsky pointed out that many students who have not acquired the skill of repeating will often do repetitions with negative effects (19-20). The art of repeating needs to be taught and using games or scorekeeping is a very powerful tool for doing so. Keeping score of successes requires that we declare and define what a successful repetition is. It also enforces an agreed upon level of consistency. Games and scorekeeping helps us to measure consistency while giving the student a sense of the progress he is making towards completing a task. In his article, Kaminsky describes a game that he calls the "Rule of 5s" (20). In this game, the number of repetitions required of a student is set at 5. Every successful repetition lowers the count by one. The student repeats until the count reaches zero. If there is a blatant error such as a wrong note or rhythm, the repetition count goes up by one. The level of consistency required by this game is that the student is required to play five more successful repetitions than unsuccessful repetitions. Further, this game and music counting games in general requires that the definition of success be clearly defined and the umpire strictly adhere to the definition in declaring whether a repetition has met the standard.

The natural course of events in a practice session is that the student and parent work hard to accurately negotiate a passage and having done so, are so relieved at having finally achieved success that they stop practicing. This is, however, when repetition should begin -- when a student can correctly execute the passage according to the defined standard, his next goal is to demonstrate that he can repeat it. If it takes five attempts for a student to successfully negotiate a challenge he will have executed four unsuccessful attempts and only one successful one. This is not a level of consistency that demonstrates mastery. As relieved as one might be to see a student succeed and as tempting as it is to "quit while you're ahead," stopping after succeeding only once would be a tragic waste of time and energy. Quitting immediately after success, rather than after being firmly placed on the road to mastery almost certainly means that you may have to go through the same learning process the next day. We end up relearning what we do not master and if relearning is the primary fact of our practicing, it is little wonder that so many of us get frustrated. Repeating immediately after you have learned the skill almost certainly means less work and less frustration in the long run.

The other benefit of game playing is that it requires an umpire to declare a repetition successful or unsuccessful.

ASC Parent Education Sessions

This means that the parent and eventually the child must understand what a successful repetition is. We need to train our students by asking “Was that right?” “Why or why not?” (Kaminsky 20) Our eventual goal is to teach the student make accurate evaluations on whether is repeating is working or not. This is part of teaching a student how to make musical judgments and an important step in preparing the student to practice on his own. As students grow in artistry, the judgments become more complex – questions such as “Did you play the right notes?” give way to questions such as “Did you sustain the line through the phrase?” Kaminsky points out that one benefit of needing many repetitions to learn a skill is that during the repetitions, we might make discoveries that change the way we think the passage should be played (21). Repetition, he concluded, is in fact the milieu in which musical discovery occurs (21). Without repetition, there is no discovery, no decision making, no artistry and no growth (Kaminsky 21). Far from making you an automaton, repetition done well is an essential part of developing artistry.

“AGAIN!”

As my elder daughter learned to swim, she would be apprehensive of the challenges that I would present to her in the water. Even if she succeeded, if I asked her to do it again, her attitude was “NOT AGAIN!” As her confidence in the water grew, her attitude towards repeating challenges changed until “AGAIN!” became a very common refrain for her in the swimming pool. Her confidence, comfort and mastery in the water changed her “Not again!” to “Again!” Help your students to master a skill through repetition and they may well find joy in doing what they do well “Again!”

Works Cited:

Kaminsky, Joseph. “Reaping the Rewards of Repetition.” The American Suzuki Journal Volume 37/4 (Summer, 2009): 19-21.

“Enroll Yourself in the Genius Factory” Interviews narr. By John Donvan. Nightline. ABC Television. 1 Oct. 2009. <<http://abcnews.go.com/video/playerindex?id=8718494>>.

Suzuki, Shinichi. Suzuki Piano School. (Volumes 1-7) Summy-Birchard, Inc. 1978-1995.

Yang, Thomas. “Practicing on the Cheap: The Economics of Repetition.” Ambassador March 2006: 2-4.



All Aber Suzuki Center parents are encouraged to attend the Parent Education Sessions which are offered to you free of charge! Join the November session, “**How to Get the Most from Your Lessons**”, on **Tuesday, November 10, at 7:30 pm in NFAC Room 144.**

Future sessions are as follows:

- “Suzuki, Translating the Philosophy into Reality”, Dec. 8
- “Practicing, the Great Quest for Consistency without Boredom”, February 9
- “The Art of Reviewing with a Purpose”, March 9
- “Fostering Independent Learning” – BRING A FRIEND MEETING!, April 13
- “You Decide the Topic” – details TBA, May 11



SAW's 5th Annual Weekend Workshop

You are invited to the 5th Annual Suzuki Weekend Workshop sponsored by the Suzuki Association of Wisconsin. The workshop is for string and piano students and will take place January 22-24, 2010 at the Inn on the Park Hotel in Madison. This will be like a mini-institute. The weekend will include group lessons taught by teachers from the state and the guest clinician will be from Missouri. The workshop begins with a play-in, ice cream social and swimming on Friday night. Students will receive three instrumental group lessons and an enrichment class. Students can choose from a wide variety of music related classes such as Improvisation, Fiddling, Music Mind Games, Musopoly, two levels of Orchestra and yoga. There will also be a parent talk given by Ed Sprunger, author of *Helping Parents Practice: Ideas for making It Easier*. In addition, there will be a pizza party, and free tickets to the Madison Children's Museum and time for swimming. The weekend concludes with a concert in the Capitol rotunda.

Registration is \$80 for the first child and \$70 for siblings, however if you **register by Nov. 10**, the cost is \$65 for the first child and \$65 for siblings. Master classes are optional at a cost of \$20. A block of rooms have been reserved for workshop participants at a special rate starting at \$94. Parents must make their own hotel arrangements. See your teacher for your brochure, go to the ASC Facebook page or go to <http://www.suzukiassociationofwisconsin.com>.



Why We Attend the American Suzuki Institute

by Andy Felt

The American Suzuki Institute helps me re-motivate myself. I see so many great teachers, dedicated parents, and talented children. They inspire me to be more patient and consistent as a parent. I pick up ideas about how to have fun in practice while at the same time making progress. My kids get to meet other kids who also like music. They see that it's okay to like the violin, and they get inspired to work hard. They also learn that it's good to have fun and to laugh. They love to swim and go to the talent show. They see their favorite teachers come back year after year. It's a special week that my kids will remember after they grow up. They're lucky to have had the chance to attend every year.



And the Survey Says....

Teachers offer many ideas each week to help Suzuki families make practice fun, schedule listening time, devise review systems, etc., but parents are a creative bunch and they know how they've tweaked those ideas to work for their children in their family routine.

This column is an opportunity for parents to share their ideas with other parents and your teachers. On the first of each month each teacher will have a half sheet of paper with a question as to how parents put Suzuki principles into action. If you have an idea to share, please write it down. Then on the 20th of the month the suggestions will be collected and published in the next Ambassador. Pick up an answer sheet from your teacher, or from the bookcase in the ASC waiting room, and share your ideas by returning the answer sheet to your teacher, or drop it in the payment box in the waiting room. Or, join the discussion on our Facebook page! Then check out the next Ambassador's "And the Survey Says...." column to learn what techniques other parents have found work for them.

The question for October was: How do you motivate your child to practice? What methods do you use?

- Practice at a consistent time so it is habit. Set goals and keep track of practice/progress. Let my child pick the reward working toward. Let my child teach me the right way to do something we are working on.
- I try to make his practice time a distraction-free zone where my full attention is centered on only him. He is very motivated to have mom-son time where mom is attentive, firm but loving. He gets "free" lap time

following practice. Following these practice goals are my own practice points.

- "Goal Card" – create a card divided into ten (for example) sections. Student receives one sticker just for practicing, and two if he/she had a good attitude. Prices vary.
- "Make a Plan" – student works with parent(s) to write a list of the things that will be done during the practice time. Gives ownership. Student knows what's coming each day.
- Having practice right after breakfast. Reward every practice: treats, loose change, hugs. Tell him he's a genius when he finally gets it. Practice first, play later (no play until practice is productive and/or successful). Listen to the music he wants to play after he has played the required pieces.
- I once made a chart challenging my son to practice more times in a week than I had exercised in the week. At the end of each week the loser owed the winner a small cash reward. We both benefitted from our "work-outs" and it made a fun competitive challenge.
- After years of practicing after school, struggling against time, allowing a little down time with outdoor play time, the family meal clean-up, homework and showers, etc., we found that getting up a half-hour earlier works much better for our family. There is no after-school pressure now, with lessons already accomplished! We also find that their mind and attitude are well rested and fresh in the morning.
- When they get the new piece from the lesson that will really motivate my children. They know repetition is important, but they like to see they are progressing.
- Give a concert to family members.
- When I asked my children, they said one of the reasons they are inspired to practice is so they can keep learning new pieces, and they want to keep learning new pieces.
- At each practice he gets a grade on attitude/enthusiasm: smiley face or frowny face. At each 100 smiley faces (in a row) increment, he gets an item he's been wanting (e.g., a toy, beanbag chair). The smiley face rates willingness to start practice without delay and with cheer. At 1,000 smiley faces he gets a laptop (used).
- We learn "outside" cool pieces (not necessarily on violin).
- Lots of saying "You're amazing!"
- "Let's surprise <teacher>. Let's see if we can knock <teacher's> socks off".
- If you practice X days in a row without complaining, then.... If you practice X days in a row without being reminded, then..... X days of 40 min. practice instead of 45; 5 min. additional TV for each day; get to rent choice of video.
- You may eat supper after you practice your scale 1 time.
- See if you can play it blindfolded (or really slow, or really fast).
- We play a game like monopoly and if I land on yours, you play X piece before I pay you. If you land on mine,

you pick the piece to play and then you pay me (or if you play the practice part three times correctly, you don't have to pay me for landing on my property).

- If you both get your practice done without being reminded, we'll go to the park. Then they remind each other.
- We make up silly word to go with the songs or how to play like "...we don't go 'zoop', we go 'zee'. Then he tells his hand to go zee and not zoop then plays it while giggling. It's fun to say the words so he wants to keep doing it or wants to start with it the next day.
- "Let's see if Dad can tell the difference between you and the recording."
- Different things work for different kids at different times.
- Listen to CD in the car.
- Bribery (reward for practicing).
- We just do it every day. Once the train is moving, it's hard to stop it. We are also very encouraging and supportive.
- One sticker for each day we practice. Six stickers gets her a special reward/prize.
- My child is older, so for us it's a simple reminder. She's self-motivated in her practicing. I'll just review lesson notes and we incorporate anything that may have been missed. For us with her being older, it's a simple respect issue – respect for her teacher and respect for herself to do her best. We get to hear the result of her hard work – Joy!
- We try to practice in the afternoon before she gets too tired.
- The best and sometimes the only effective motivator has been my daughter's relationship with the teacher. She will practice only with a reluctant delay and opposition by all (several years and 2nd Suzuki child) parental methods. We have tried money, treats, punishments, all ineffective on a sustained basis. Her practice level increases before concerts/assembly.
- Be positive about it. Create games so they don't realize they worked on technique.
- M&M's for practicing correctly.
- Practice before playing. I do use candy or mini-marshmallows for my four year old. Also we have competitions for playing parts correctly.

November's question: How do you make practice fun? How do you create a positive, musical learning environment?



We're on Facebook!

The Aber Suzuki Center is now on Facebook! Become a fan, post your favorite pictures, participate in discussions (including the "And the Survey Says...." question of the month), find information on upcoming events, or check out photos from past events! We hope to see you there!



Student News

Teddy Schenkman (viola), and **Michael Josephson** (violin) are playing in the Wisconsin High School Honors Orchestra at the WTA Convention.

Alex Buehler (saxophone), and **Lindsey Mocadlo** (trumpet) are playing in the Wisconsin High School Honors Band. Both groups performed in a concert at the Overture Center in Madison on Thursday, October 29, 2009.

Emily McIntee (voice) is participating in the Wisconsin High School Honors Choir.

Bryce Marion and **Annie Yao** performed in the All-State Wisconsin Middle School Honors Orchestra. They performed Sat., Oct. 31 in Madison.

Voice student **Mikaela Schneider** will perform Schubert's Ave Maria with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra December 5, 6 and 7.

The following students played at the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra's intermission on Saturday, October 10: **Laura Josephson, Annie Yao, Rachel Reichert, Jason Smith, Naomi Crump, Alex Reeser, Alex Buehler, Cal Irons, Natalie Galster, and Will Mitchell.**

The following students played at the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra's intermission on Sunday, October 11: **Christina Marchel, Sarah Harmon, Dinesh Traynor, Roshini Traynor, Alyssa Schroeckenthaler, Jonathan Peck, Frederick Van Tiem, Antony Van Tiem, Annelise Odders, and Erin Tschida.**

Students who participated in the Halloween Marathon, October 24, had a great time showing off their Halloween costumes!



Faculty News

Mary Hofer and Pat D'Ercole attended the first International Suzuki Association Teacher Trainer Conference Oct. 8-11 in Boston. The conference was a chance for the trainers of each of the regional Suzuki Associations to share their approaches to training teachers of the Suzuki Method.



Happy Thanksgiving



Christmas Carols

For those who are interested in learning the most popular Christmas Carols,
below are the keys and starting notes.

For Cello, Violin and Viola

<u>Carol</u>	<u>Key</u>	<u>Starting Note</u>	<u>Cello String & Finger</u>	<u>Violin/Viola String & Finger</u>
Away in A Manger	G Major	G	D4	D3
Joy To The World	D Major	D	A4	A3
Jingle Bells	G Major	"Dashing" D	Open D	Open D
		"Chorus" B	A1	A1
O Come All Ye Faithful	G Major	G	D4	D3
Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer	G Major	D	Open D	Open D
Hark The Herald Angels Sing	G Major	D	Open D	Open D
Silent Night	C Major	G	D4	D3
Deck the Halls	G Major	D	A4	A3
Angels We Have Heard On High	G Major	B	A1	A1
The First Noel	D Major	F [#]	D3	D2
O Christmas Tree	G Major	D	Open D	Open D
We Wish You A Merry Christmas	G Major	D	Open D	Open D

For Piano

<u>Carol</u>	<u>Key</u>	<u>Starting Note</u>	<u>Finger</u>
Jingle Bells	C Major	E	3
Joy To The World	C Major	C	5
Away In A Manger	C Major	C	5
Silent Night	C Major	G	2
The First Noel	C Major	E	3
Deck the Halls	C Major	G	5