



AMBASSADOR

Aber Suzuki Center

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

March, 2011

Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 12, 2011
Marathon, 9am – Noon

Sunday, March 13, 2011
Solo Recitals
Michelsen Hall, 2:00 and 3:30 pm

Saturday, April 9, 2011
Piano Only Marathon, 9am – Noon

Sunday, April 10, 2011
Solo Recitals
Michelsen Hall, 2:00 and 3:30 pm

Saturday, April 30, 2011
Marathon, 9am – Noon (no piano)

Sunday, May 1, 2011
String and Voice Festival Concert
Ben Franklin Junior High School
2:00 pm

Sunday, May 8, 2011
Cello Day 2011
Noel Fine Arts Center
10:00 am – 6:00 pm

From the Director's Desk

By Pat D'Ercole

I couldn't believe what I was hearing when I opened my garage door the other morning—birds singing! Then I began to notice that even amid the huge piles of snow, signs of spring are beginning to show--the longer days, flocks of geese travelling back north, some bare earth where sun shines most of the day, and yes, some brave birds chirping to welcome a new slightly warmer, brighter day. There's a little excitement in the air as the earth begins to wake from its long sleep. We have excitement here at ASC as well. Read the following pages and see for yourself that there are lots of new events and offerings beginning to bloom in our program.

The 2011 ASI brochure is now online. View our promotional video and all of the new events and activities for 2011. Make plans to come and even order our *Earn Your Way to ASI Toolkit*.

We have two new initiatives beginning this month to help parents in their role as home teacher. The first is an internet blog for ASC parents called, "From Solo to Symphony". In today's fast paced world, we're looking for ways that we can stay connected even when our schedules don't allow it to happen physically. At a parent's suggestion, we are also starting a "Practice Buddy Program." Read all about it on p.3.

Speaking of practice and making the most of your time, be sure to read Mr. Yang's article. Since this model of teaching has been adopted by Suzuki teachers and subsequently taught to parents and students, many

have commented about the improvement in the rate of progress and motivation.

And if you want to inspire your child and help them to form a vision of themselves as an accomplished musician, mark your calendar for April 16 or 17th and come to hear cellist and ASC alumni, Peter Thomas solo with the Central Wisconsin Symphony. He will also be teaching a master class for our ASC cellists. See the article for more details.

Finally, thank you to all for your patience with me regarding the late cancellation of the February recital. At 11:00 am when the decision was to be made there was not a snowflake in sight, but by 12:50 it was a totally different story--and that wasn't really known until I began to drive in it. Just a reminder, whenever the weather conditions are hazardous and travel is difficult, we want you to be safe. If you decide to cancel, please call your teacher's studio and leave a message.



Laser Surgery: Teaching Your Child the Art of Focused Practicing

By Thomas Yang

"He who aims at nothing is sure to hit it."

-Anonymous Proverb

To begin, I would like to recommend an article by Lisa Toner, in the American Suzuki Journal, Vol. 39/1. She provides an overview of some of the work of Robert Duke and Daniel Coyle on what makes practicing effective (46-47). She also chronicles how she learned to teach a student to engage in his own development (48-50). My thinking about practicing changed rather dramatically after reading this article. While I thought I understood the general notion of a "highly focused, error targeted process" (Coyle, 4) – that is, practicing to solve very specific problems – I failed to take into account how important it is to teach the child to do the aiming. If we expect our students to target and correct a problem, they will need to know what the problem is and when they have corrected it. After reading Toner's article I realized that what Coyle was getting at was that clarity of purpose always precedes clarity of actions. Toner wrote of a young clarinet player highlighted in Daniel Coyle's The Talent Code who "was not an exceptionally good or motivated player, and didn't often practice pro-

ductively. However, in the key video excerpt, she is seen working toward a clear goal (47)." What Toner says here is that effective repetition is not so much about producing identical iterations as it is about giving the learner a clear goal to be reached through the repetitive cycle.

I was teaching a lesson where I asked a student what she could do to make a particular passage work better. She answered "I could practice it." Another student was asked, after playing a playing an assigned passage, if what he did was successful. His answer was "I don't know." These two cases revealed a hole in my teaching. In the case of the first student, I needed to clarify that practicing without an accompanying goal does not make things better. In the second, I needed to help the student determine whether or not he was progressing towards the goal of the repetitive cycle. Without taking the time to explain to our students what to accomplish and when it has been accomplished, our students will start to feel that practicing is about repeating actions that have no meaning.

To expect effective practicing from our students, we need to give them clear goals to reach in their practice sessions. The first and most obvious way that we do this is to play the recordings for them. Make listening to music a part of your child's practice. Your teacher may ask you to further engage your student in listening by having her sing, dance and beat time with the music. Listen to the pieces your student is working on, listen to pieces that your student will be working on and listen to pieces that are outside of the Suzuki repertoire. By doing this you are giving your child a long range target at which to aim and you give meaning to the goals that we ask of them. Our music students will only understand what beautiful tone production, playing in tune and playing with rhythmic precision are when they hear performances that exemplify these ideals.

Sometime during the course of your child's learning of a piece, your teacher will probably assign brief passages of the piece to repeat and master. The iterative process of playing, receiving feedback and making adjustments has been described in the Suzuki Principles in Action workbook as a "Teaching Segment" (37-38). In a teaching segment, a student performs a short, well-defined passage of music, the parent or teacher gives a short comment as feedback, the student repeats the passage with appropriate adjustments. The repeated executions and feedback are designed to modify the student's performance of this passage toward a goal set by the

teacher. How well you learn to use teaching segments will go a long way in determining the outcome of your child's music lessons.

There are two components to repeating in practice. The first is the execution of the assigned passage; the second is the space between the iterations of the passage. We tend to focus on the execution of the iteration, but what happens in the spaces between the iterations is the driving force of your student's progress. There are two things that need to happen in the spaces between the playing of the passage. The student and coach must evaluate what happened in the previous repetition and the student must know what he and the coach want to happen in the next repetition. It should be a major goal of the teacher and parent to help the child develop this critical skill of knowing what the goal of the repetitions are and knowing whether he is approaching this goal.

Let's say that your teacher has assigned a teaching segment to your student ("Please play measures 5-8 five times and make all the tones match"). Between every repetition, the parent/coach needs to give feedback to the student in order to get the student to migrate to a new and better realization of tone quality. We might say "last note sounded weak" or "first note stuck out a bit." At any rate, we're simply providing information to the student in order for him to make adjustments. Feedback can be made by asking questions. "Did you make all the tones full?" "Were you high or low on the C-natural?" (This is what my daughter and I have been doing this week.) "What are you going to do on the next repetition?" "Were you faster in the beginning or the end?" The benefit of providing feedback in the form of a question is that we can find out if our student understands why we are repeating the passage. Getting a student to remember what he has just done and what he intends to do next is a powerful practice tool. Last week I had a student working on Minuet 3 and I wanted him to use his right hand 4 finger on the f-sharp before the final chord. In spite of my stellar teaching point, he continued to use his 3 finger on the f-sharp which made it trickier to find the last chord. Fishing for some magical solution I finally said "pick a number between 1 and 5." He picked a number and I played the f-sharp with the finger corresponding to that number. He picked several numbers and I played the passage several times using the finger number he chose on the f-sharp. The point was because I was focused on the issue of putting a given finger on the f-sharp, I could easily adjust to whatever finger he asked for. Finally I said, "Now

you play and I will pick number 4." He then executed the passage with the 4-finger several times and then proceeded to match me by playing the f-sharp with any finger I chose. The fact is if the goal is clear in the student's mind and the goal is within reach of the student's ability (Duke, 98-102), he will probably reach the goal. Having the student say what he is going to do makes the goal clear. Toner recounted a teaching segment where her student was required to say low or high on a note to be played with his 2 finger. Because he articulated what he had to do, he improved his intonation (49-50). I attempted to replicate this with my daughter on the cello. She had trouble playing a c natural in tune because she was not attentive to the backward extension. Using Toner's model, I had her say "back" before she played the extension. After each execution I asked her whether the pitch sounded high or low. In other words, in this teaching segment my daughter articulated what she had to do before doing it then assessed whether the result met the standard. We accomplished in one practice session what weeks of me nagging her to "play it in tune" could not.

A more sophisticated teaching segment might look like this:

Parent: Let's work on measures 3 and 4 of Honeybee and make sure that every tone matches.

(Student plays)

Parent: Did the tones match?

Student: I think so.

Parent: Did you think that the last two notes sped up?

Student: I'm not sure.

Parent: Let's find out!

(Student plays)

Parent: What do you think?

Student: I think that I played a little faster at the end.

Parent: Can you fix that?

(Student plays)

Parent: What do you think now?

Student: I don't think I sped up at the end.

Parent: I don't either. Sometimes tones don't match because they are played at different levels of loudness. Did any of the notes that you played seem too loud or too soft?

Student: The first note seemed too loud.

Parent: What do you think that you should do?

And so on until we reach the prescribed number of repetitions. Note that as the student catches on and begins to share in the practice process, the parent might make the questions less directed. "What do you want to do on the next repetition?" "Did you like the way that

sounded? Why?" "What would happen if you played everything softly?" "What else do you think might improve your performance of this passage?"

Taking the time to get your student to evaluate and direct his practicing may seem to take more effort and teaching agility when compared with just telling your student what to do, but it saves work in the long run and is a necessary step towards independent learning. When a student has a larger role in his learning process he is also taking on more of the responsibility for the outcome of his work. This can be very liberating for both the parent and teacher. Skills learned by engaged students are more likely to be deeply learned, permanent and transferable.

The fact is repetition in music practice is not a boring but necessary evil that must be borne by musicians. When we give students realistic goals for them to reach in their repetitions they will begin to understand that it is the heart of creative music-making. It is during goal-oriented repetition, that the musician is called to exercise judgment, creativity and technical skill. It is through this kind of repetition that we experiment with ideas, sound and pacing -- all while discovering more about what the piece is about. Far from suppressing creativity in performance art, repetition, properly done, is the sketchpad where performance creativity begins.

Works Cited

- Coyle, Daniel. The Talent Code. New York: Bantam Books, 2009.
- Duke, Robert. Intelligent Music Teaching: Essays on the Core Principles of Effective Instruction. Austin, TX: Learning and Behavior Resources, 2005.
- Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc. Suzuki Principles in Action: Supporting the Quest for Excellence in Suzuki Education. Boulder, CO: Suzuki Association of the Americas, 2010.
- Toner, Lisa. "Toward Self-Regulated Learning: Scaffolding Deep Practice Habits in Suzuki Violin Students." American Suzuki Journal 39/1 (2010): 46-51.



"Without stopping, without haste, carefully taking a step at a time forward will surely get you there."

-Shinichi Suzuki

Faculty News

ASC cello teacher Tim Mutschlechner will be performing two new works commissioned by the Point Dance Ensemble on Friday, March 11, and Saturday, March 12, 2011 at 7:30pm at Sentry Theatre. These pieces were composed for electric cello and a multi-track cello recording with choreography by Pam Luedtke.

Parents Suggest Practice Buddy Program

At the January marathon, about 20-25 ASC parents met from 9:30 to 10:15 to converse about the successes and challenges of being a Suzuki parent. One of the ideas suggested was for younger lesser advanced students to have a more advanced student act as a Practice Buddy. Practices with a "buddy" could be a regular meeting or just a once in awhile occurrence. Buddies are students who have sufficient independent practice skills to practice with a younger child on the same instrument. If you are such a student and would have an interest in helping another student, please sign your name and phone number on the list in the waiting room. If you are a parent looking for a way to break up the routine or just someone with a bit more playing knowledge to assist you, check out the list in the waiting room and give a buddy a call.



News Briefs:

***The Stolen Goldin Violin* is now available on the Kindle!**

To order your copy, go to
http://www.amazon.com/The-Stolen-Goldin-Violin-ebook/dp/B004PVSSHW/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2&s=digital-text&qid=1298919729&sr=8-2

ASC invoices are now being sent via e-mail!

In an effort to reduce postage costs we are now sending your ASC payment invoices through your e-mail address. If you have any questions, please call the office.

Composer of the Month
Antonio Lucio Vivaldi

By Ann Marie Novak

Antonio Lucio Vivaldi was born on March 4, 1678 in Venice, Italy. He studied the violin from a very young age with his father, Giovanni. At the age of 15, Antonio decided to devote himself to God by becoming a Roman Catholic Priest. He completed his religious training at the seminary, and he was ordained at the age of 25. His bright red hair earned him the nickname, "The Red Priest". Unfortunately, Antonio had a long-term illness that made it difficult for him to keep up with his priestly duties and responsibilities. He was forced to withdraw from the priesthood, but he vowed to devote his music to God.

The young Vivaldi took employment at Pio Ospedale della Pieta (an orphanage for girls), which offered musical instruction as a large part of the curriculum. At first, his responsibilities included teaching violin lessons, conducting and composing instrumental works. This was the beginning of his outstanding career as a composer. In 1716, while still at the orphanage, he was appointed to the most prestigious position of maestro de concerti. He also was granted the right to compose sacred music.

Vivaldi spent the next several years travelling within Italy. These years netted some of his best-known compositions, such as "The Four Seasons", Op. 8. Antonio became known for his instrumental compositions (especially the concertos), but he also wrote vocal works, including operas and oratorios.

Vivaldi's popularity in Venice was declining in Venice by 1739. It is possible that this prompted him to travel to Vienna in June of 1741. He became ill the following month, and he died on July 28. He was penniless at the time of his death, and he was buried in a pauper's grave on the grounds of the hospital.



**The Name a Seat Campaign Yields
First Scholarship to ASC**

The Name a Seat Campaign in Michelsen Hall is over 50% complete and is already paying dividends. In the fall of 2011, the Aber Suzuki Center along with each of

the departments in the College will receive the first scholarship in the amount of \$250. As more money is donated and more of the seats are named, each of the departments will receive larger scholarship amounts. If you are interested in naming a seat, please contact CJ Robinson, (cjrobinson@uwsp.edu).



**The Suzuki Association of the Americas donates
\$1,000 for ASI Scholarships**

Many of you have participated in the Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA) *Parents As Partners Online* video education series for the last six weeks. The Aber Suzuki Center offered free registration to our parents through studio funds received from the American Suzuki Foundation. Because of the overwhelming success of the event (the SAA was expecting 1500 registrants and received 6500!) and because the American Suzuki Institute was instrumental in providing a number of the videos from the lecture series at the 2010 American Suzuki Institute, the SAA donated \$1,000 to the ASI for scholarships. How many of you saw the national premiere showing of our promotional video for the ASI that was aired on January 31st? You can now also view it on our website.



Peter Thomas Plays Solo with the CWSO

Remember when we went to hear the Milwaukee Symphony play Beethoven's Ninth and afterward a young, handsome man in tails came on each bus to thank you for coming to the concert? That young man was ASC alumnus Peter Thomas who is a cellist in the MSO. He is coming to perform the Saint-Saens's Cello Concerto No.1 with the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra on April 16 & 17. He will also be giving a master class for ASC cellists on Wed., April 13 4:00. See Dr. Tim for more details.

Originally from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, where he started to play the cello in 1986 at age five, Peter Tho-

mas was born into a family of musicians. He graduated from the ASTEC Suzuki Education Program in 1999 studying under Dr. Lawrence Leviton and went on to win numerous scholarships and competitions as an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. In 2005 he earned a master of music degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music under the guidance of Stephen Geber, Principal Cello (retired) of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Mr. Thomas was appointed to the cello section of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra in May 2005, and won the position of Assistant Principal Cello of the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra in March 2006. In October 2007, Thomas moved to Miami Beach and joined the New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy, where he performed Elgar's Cello Concerto as the NWS 2008 Concerto Competition winner.

As of November 2008, Mr. Thomas resides in Milwaukee after winning the position of Third Chair Cello in the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. An active chamber musician and experimental collaborator, Thomas can be heard with his string quartet, the Arcas Quartet, and his classically infused indie-rock band, I'm Not A Pilot, in the Milwaukee area and on many local radio stations.



Student News

Thanks to these performers:

The **ASC Opera Troupe** for their performance for the Kindergarten through 5th grade at St. Bronislava School Feb. 1.

Aurora Quartet for their performance at the Dreyfus University Center Valentine's Day Dinner.

Congratulations to students who auditioned for the All-State Wisconsin Honors Chorus: Cianna Rose
And the All-State Wisconsin Honors Orchestra: Alan Kiepert, Craig Felt, Laura Josephson , Annie Yao, Al Reeser, Teddy Schenkman, Lauren Sheibley, Jason Smith

"Achievement is the product of energy and patience, which have to be trained like all other abilities."

-Shinichi Suzuki

Festival Concert Review Lists

Mark your calendars! Invite family and friends! The Festival Concert will be held on May 1 at Ben Franklin Junior High at 2:00. It's time to begin our preparation. Though it may seem a bit premature to print the review list, the April Ambassador would be a little too late. Besides we need to be really polished as this year's concert will be videotaped and aired on cable access TV so all your friends and family in the area can see you. Please be sure to give extra attention to these pieces:

Violin

Fantomen	Ost/McLean
Bach Double	J.S. Bach
Two Grenadiers	R. Schumann
Happy Farmer in C	R. Schumann
Allegro in A	S. Suzuki
May Song in D	Folk Song
Song of the Wind in A	Folk Song
Twinkles in D	S. Suzuki

Viola

Sonata in G Major 2. Allegro	B. Marcello
Serenade	G. B. Sammartini
	Grace Vamos
Theme from Witches Dance	N. Paganini
Trio Sonata in a minor	M. McLean
Happy Farmer	R. Schumann
May Song in D	Folk Song
Go Tell Aunt Rhody	Folk Song
Twinkle Var. A	Folk Song/Suzuki

Cello

Elegy	G. Faure
March in G	J. S. Bach
Happy Farmer	R. Schumann
Rigadoon	H. Purcell

WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR AT ASI?



EARN YOUR WAY TO ASI TOOLKIT – We designed a toolkit to assist you in soliciting funds from your local merchants to help defray the cost of attending ASI. See page 6 for details.



MONDAY GUEST ARTISTS – We have lined up some wonderful guest artists for you (check our website for expanded biographies)

Monday, August 1st

Ann Lobotzke - She is principal harpist for the Milwaukee Ballet, a longtime substitute for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and the harpist for the Skylight Opera. Her orchestral venues have been as diverse as Carnegie Hall in New York City, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and Teatro Amadeo Roldan in Havana, Cuba.

and

Julie Ann Smith - Principal Harpist of the San Diego Symphony, Julie Ann Smith is one of the most prominent young harpists today, performing as both an orchestral musician and concert artist. Silver medalist winner in the 2004 USA International Harp Competition and Bronze medalist in 2001, she made her National Symphony Orchestra debut in 2003 and has been honored in numerous competitions throughout the country.

Monday, August 8th

Andrew Fuller, Violin - As a Suzuki student, his primary teachers include the late Margery Aber, Jennifer Burton, and Paul Landefeld. As a soloist, Andrew has performed with orchestras including the Milwaukee, Madison and Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestras, and the National Repertory Orchestra in Breckenridge, Colorado. Presently he plays first violin in both the Kansas City Symphony and Grant Park Orchestra.

and

Laura Fuller, Viola - violist in the Kansas City Symphony, is also the Assistant Principal in Chicago's Grant Park Orchestra. As an orchestral musician, she has been a regular substitute with the Philadelphia Orchestra since 2005, and has also performed with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Baltimore Symphony Orchestras. She served as principal violist at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the National Repertory Orchestra.



RESIDENCE HALLS:

EVERY room is air conditioned AND has its own thermostat!!

Communal kitchens will be available on every floor (bring your own pots, pans, utensils, etc.)!!

Fitted bottom sheets for your comfort!!



EXTENDED MEAL HOURS!



CHOICE OF TWO MEAL PLANS.



COLLECTION FOR LATIN AMERICA – Do you have an extra copy of a Suzuki CD or book you don't need?

Have a shoulder rest that you've outgrown?

A set of strings for an instrument that you've traded in, or an instrument you'd like to donate?

We're collecting usable music-related items for disadvantaged Suzuki students in Latin America. You bring it to us, and we'll get it to them!



SPECIAL COMMUTER AMENITIES – For those families who commute to campus each day, you'll be able to enjoy our commuter lounge and free lockers (bring your own lock).



ALL ASI ALUMNI ARE INVITED TO JOIN IN THE FESTIVAL CONCERT OF THEIR INSTRUMENT. See our website for review lists.



FREE LECTURES FOR PARENTS TO ATTEND WHILE THE CHILDREN ATTEND FREE ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Learn how to make your life as a Suzuki parent easier!

Monday-Thursday, 11am



SUNDAY ACTIVITY FOR THE KIDS - Point Brewery Root Beer and backyard games for the kids. 3-5 pm



NOTE READING 101 FOR SUZUKI PARENTS – At the

end of this course, you will be able to:

Read pitches on the treble and bass clefs.

Apply those pitches to your child's particular instrument.

Understand the concept of half- and whole-steps.

Count and clap various rhythmic patterns.

Sight-sing a basic melody in a major key.

Presented by Ann Marie Novak, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 5:00 lecture



WEDNESDAY FREE TIME – This year's offerings are free kayaking lessons, free climbing wall, free

Molly the Trolley rides,

and if you bring your bicycle or want to hike, we'll supply you with a

map of The Green Circle Trail which is a 30.5 mile hiking and biking trail that loops around the

Stevens Point area. The trail has 14

connecting segments that wind through forests, wetlands, and along rivers.

Blog Open for ASC Parents

The blog, ASC Parents: Solo to Symphony will open March 14. Why a blog for parents? We've noticed how much you've enjoyed getting together and having discussions around coffee and donuts at a couple of marathons this year. We hope that our new blog will allow you to continue some of those discussions from the comfort of your own homes. We've also heard feedback from some of you regarding the Parents as Partners Online program sponsored by the SAA and ASC, and we thought it might be helpful to carry some of that momentum into our own parent program.

What do you have to do? It's easy! Just join us at:

<http://ascparentssolo2symphony.blogspot.com>



Choose a topic that is of interest to you, read a short couple of paragraphs posted by our faculty, and join in the discussion with other parents from our program. New items will be posted weekly throughout the school year and biweekly in the summer. Join us soon and enjoy the blog designed with you in mind!