

# Aber Suzuki Center



University of Wisconsin  
Stevens Point

## AMBASSADOR

MARCH 2014

### Upcoming Events

**Saturday, March 8, 2014**

Marathon, 9 am – noon

**Sunday, March 9, 2014**

Solo Recitals

Michelsen Hall, 2:00 and 3:30 pm

**Saturday, March 22, 2014**

Thomas Meronek Senior Recital

Michelsen Hall, 7:30 pm

**Saturday, April 5, 2014**

Marathon – Piano Only

9 am – noon

**Saturday, April 5, 2014**

Solo Recitals

NFAC 221, 2:00 and 3:30 pm

**Saturday, April 26, 2014**

Marathon – except Piano

9 am – noon

**Sunday, April 27, 2014**

Voice & String Festival Concert

Ben Franklin Junior High School, 2:00 pm

**Tuesday, April 29, 2014**

Daniel Coyle – The Talent Code

Theater@1800, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, Free

**Sunday, May 4, 2014**

Piano Festival Concert

NFAC 221, 12:30, 2:00 and 3:30 pm

**Saturday, May 10, 2014**

Solo Recitals

Michelsen Hall, 2:00 and 3:30 pm

**Saturday, May 10, 2014**

Central State Chamber Orchestra Concert

Michelsen Hall, 7:30 pm

### From the Director's Desk

By Pat D'Ercole

It's official! We've officially opened the Centennial Celebration of the birth of ASC's founder, Margery Aber. Her 100th birthday was on Feb. 15, the same day as our faculty recital. Many of the current ASC faculty knew Miss Aber personally. She played chamber music with Mr. Becker's family when he was in junior high and high school; she's was Miss Burton's and Prof. Pat's major professor when they received their master's degree from UWSP; she strongly encouraged Miss Hofer to investigate and adapt the Suzuki method for Voice, and Miss Novak accompanied her in recital (and, as we heard at the faculty recital, on visits to Sam's Club!)

One way we will continue to get to know Miss Aber through the remainder of the year is by reading her own thoughts-- about teaching and learning, the Suzuki philosophy, music and parenting. When Miss Aber was director of ASC she wrote a short reflection on the back of each recital program. As the year progresses, we will be reprinting one of those reflection on each of our current recital programs. Our goal is that as we celebrate 1) you will learn a little more about the spirit behind the inspiration that started this program, 2) that you'll learn about ASC's and ASI's prominent place in the history of Suzuki movement in the world and 3) take pride in and make a commitment to continue her legacy.

A very special thank you goes to Ann Marie Novak and Jennifer Burton for organizing this event and to Miss Novak for the splendid slide show about Miss Aber that played during the evening. Thanks to all the families who contributed the bountiful recep-

tion and most of all, for honoring us with your presence.

At the marathon Saturday, we had an unusual mini-concert. We made a recording of the *ASI Song* for our Facebook page. What is the *ASI Song*? If you missed it or want to see how the video turned out, go to our UWSP American Suzuki Institute Facebook page <http://bit.ly/9RfJVe> to find out. The lyrics are re-printed in the Ambassador for your singing pleasure. (You'll be invited to join Facebook, but you won't have to do that to see the post.)

We have two excellent feature articles in this issue. The first is by a Suzuki parent from Rochester, MN. She describes many of the thoughts that a first-time ASI parent might be thinking as they decide whether or not to attend. The second article is by Tom Yang. Always the insightful parent and teacher, be sure to read his very valuable suggestions about structuring practice to be, efficient, productive and fun.



### A Suzuki Mom's ASI Experience

*This article about ASI appeared in the Southeastern Minnesota Suzuki Association's September News Letter:*

You want me to what???

Take an entire week off work, my precious vacation time, to sign up for a music camp with my daughter where she and I will attend several music instruction classes a day, every day, to enhance her playing skills...and it will be fun?? Not wanting to hurt our beloved teacher's feelings, I kindly indicate that I will think about it and check our calendar...when in reality, I would be "thinking" about coming up with an excuse as to why it would not work out and "checking our calendar" in secret hopes that it would conflict with some other plans.

At our next lesson, our teacher persists. "Have you had a chance to think about it? I'm offering scholarships to some of my studio families who are interested in attending the Institute this summer and if you are a member of SEMSA, you can apply for a

small scholarship for first time attendees." There goes my excuse that we cannot afford it.

As it turned out, our family actually could not afford a summer vacation that year, so our summer calendar was as wide open as the Grand Canyon. She continues to persist and produces a packet of information about the American Suzuki Institute at the University of Wisconsin's campus in Steven's Point. She even has an application. She takes the time to explain a bit more detail about the Institute and even goes so far as to tell me some people have found it to be a "life changing" experience. All right, it's starting to peak my interest. Then I notice that accommodations are actually dorms. During my college years, I always lived off campus...I can't imagine how I would survive in a dorm room. I've aged and the thought of shared bathrooms...Ugh! Of course our very generous teacher offers to have my daughter and I share her comfortable hotel room, which just so happens to have a pool. Man, she REALLY wants us to go.

So, I think about it in earnest this time. Not being one to deny my child an opportunity to participate in something that may further enrich her life and wanting to be open to try new things, I have a change of heart. Maybe there will be other beginners there. Maybe it won't be as hard-core as I imagine. Maybe my daughter will meet new friends. Maybe it will be a quality bonding experience for me and my daughter. Maybe this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. (Maybe our teacher should be in sales.) Maybe, just maybe, I would enjoy staying in a dorm!

Fast forward a couple of months and WOW! I cannot believe how much we LOVED ASI! My daughter and I thoroughly enjoyed every moment we spent at the American Suzuki Institute. What a lovely campus, what lovely people, what fabulous instructors, what beautiful music! What FUN!! The week flew by. It was a perfect mix of instruction, performance and recreation. There was no pretense or pressure...just one big happy Suzuki family encouraging one another and celebrating each individual's hard work and special gifts. We left the Institute feeling refreshed, re-energized and with a greater appreciation for the Suzuki method of teaching.

Needless to say, we are now resolved to attend ASI every year, for as long as we are able. We just returned from our second year and the experience was equally as fantastic. Once again, we made new friends, but this time, we had the added joy of meeting up with many of the friends we met last year. We continued to discover new and interesting places on and around the campus (the Natural History Museum is among our favorites). And yes, we stayed in the dorms and loved it...again.

My daughter and I will forever cherish the ASI experience as it truly is an experience worth having. But even more, we will cherish our teacher, Paula Stewart, for her generosity, persistence and encouragement. Because had it not been for her, we never would have attended ASI and may have never fully realized the richness and beauty that music education has to offer.



### **Can I Try that Again?**

**By Tom Yang**

It is pretty much a given, that practicing which only includes playing pieces from beginning to end is not an efficient way to develop skills and improve performance. Everyone who has studied music has probably received an assignment that goes along the lines of “play measures 7-8 of Minuet X ten times every day.” While an assignment like this will likely improve practice efficiency, it is missing an important element. The Suzuki Principles in Action (SPA)<sup>(1)</sup> course has defined an object that it calls a teaching segment (34-8). In a teaching segment, a goal is defined and through an iterative process, a practice procedure is developed that can be easily repeated by the student at home. A well-designed practice procedure is one that sets up a challenge that is within the student’s grasp and defined clearly enough that the student can easily evaluate whether he has met the challenge or not. In short, the student should be able to accurately give thumbs up or thumbs down to every repetition he makes. Setting up a well-designed practice assignment is like designing a game. There are two elements to game design that make a person want to play a game:

1. Winning and losing are clearly defined. The player needs to know what the challenge is.
2. The challenge needs to be non-trivial but still within the player’s reach. We want the player to think either “If I only had another try, I bet I could do it” or “I think that I could do it better the next time.”

If the objective is clear and the player perceives that he can master it, he will want to play. The presence of these elements is what causes players to want to play electronic games again and again. Children have a thirst for mastery. If they know what to do and think they can do it, they will exert the necessary effort.

Consider the following scenarios:

Your child is in a basketball game setting up for a free-throw. The game is on the line. She lets the ball fly. It rims out. She goes to the ref and says “Isn’t that good enough?” The crowd begins booing the ref for being too strict.

OR

Your child is playing an electronic game. He makes a mistake and the dreaded words “Game Over” appear on the screen. He shakes his head and says “This is too hard. I give up. Guess I’ll go to my room and finish reading War and Peace for English on Monday.”

OR

Your child’s baseball team is up at bat. The first five batters hit safely. The sixth batter says, “This is going to take forever to get three outs. Can we be allowed one out just this once?”

All three scenarios are laughably implausible. The first, because the rules of basketball are very clear, you get points when the ball goes in the basket, you don’t if it doesn’t. Close doesn’t count and everyone understands this. The second, because game designers understand that to get people to want to play the game, the rules must not only be clear, but success or improvement must always seem to be within the grasp of the player. A game design that “hooks” players is one where the player thinks, “I’m sure that I could do better if I only had another try.”

The third, because in a baseball game, repetitions (which is what every at bat is) are viewed as opportunities to succeed not redundancies to be endured.

Consider the following snippet from A Short Story by Heinrich Lichner, found in Suzuki Piano School, Volume 2<sup>(2)</sup> (8-9). This snippet, two measures in length, is played by the right hand beginning with the pickup to measure 7 through the third beat of measure 8. There are three challenges in this snippet (labeled A, B and C):

- A. Shifting the hand position in the first three notes (d-e-d) by using finger 231 in this group of notes.
- B. Realizing the eighth note rest, by getting the hand to lift off the keyboard on the d and land on the high g.
- C. Playing the tied note rhythm (the g in beats 2 and 3 of the second measure), correctly so that the eighth notes (f#-e-f #) are played at the right time.

(fingerings)      2 3 1      4



A: |----|  
 B:    |----|  
 C:    |-----|

Because the snippet is so short, it might be tempting to ask the student to repeat this snippet x number of times in a practice assignment. The problem is that the definition of winning and losing is not clear. How would the student evaluate his repetition: “I met challenge A, but not B and C?” Clearly, evaluating whether you won or lost would be too complex – which may cause the student to lose focus on the challenges.

To make the game or practice segment appealing, we need to clarify the rules. The first practice assignment (marked off by label A) is the first three notes of the snippet. The objective is to start with the 2 on the d and end with the 1 on the d. We tell the student that he must STOP on the second d. By stopping, the student can easily see whether he accomplished the objective. If finger 1 is on d he wins, if it is not he loses. To make the practice more in-

teresting we keep score (after all what is a game but a series of repetitive, mundane activities on which you keep statistics?) “If you did this 10 times how many times would you win?” “Can you break your old record?”

The second challenge in this snippet (marked off by label B) starts from the d at the end of segment A and ends on the g after the eighth note rest. There are only three elements to this segment the d, the rest and the g. This game is more complicated but can still be clearly understood. Here the student needs to lift his hand off the D to create the silence and then land on the G with finger 4. We again insist on her stopping at the G. We then ask “Did you make the leap and did you land on the G with your 4 finger? Because the segment was short the student should be able to recall whether or not she lifted her hand. Because she stopped at the end of the segment, she can check to see whether finger 4 landed on the G.

Once challenge 2 is mastered, it will no longer be of interest as a game (games where you win all the time are not really games). We begin at challenge B and go to the end of the snippet (marked off by label C). Our goal is to have the student correctly execute the tied note. Some work with the teacher will allow the student to sense the pulse on the tie. When the student senses the pulse he now understands the game because he knows what constitutes winning and losing. We can now keep score. “Did you hold the note through the tie?” “How many times out of ten can you do this?”

### General Principals for Constructing and Playing Practice Segments

- Practice segments should be short and should contain only one skill to work on. Note that in the example used in this article, the segment was reasonably short, but because there were three skills to master, we had to adjust the segment so that there would only be one challenge per segment.
- The definition of success must be made clear. (“Did you end up on finger 2?”)
- The challenge must seem to be within the player’s immediate grasp (“If I had another try, I bet I could get it!”).

- The further the challenge is from the beginning of the practice segment, the less likely the student will be able to focus his attention on correctly executing the challenge. In fact, the student may break down before reaching the challenge and never even try the challenge.
- The further the challenge is from the end of the practice segment, the less likely it is that the student will make a useful assessment of whether the repetition was successful or not. I often like to end the segment right on the challenge so that it is the last thing the student does in the repetition. Insist that your student stops right on the end of the practice segment. If she plays past the stopping point, she will not likely make note of what adjustments need to be made or she will not remember what it feels or sounds like to succeed. Playing past the stopping point is a disruption to the feedback loop that is vital for skill development.
- As your student works on the assignment, he should develop the ability to set up the practice segment without assistance. Learning to set up and learning where to stop contributes to the student's overall awareness of the practice segment and the music around it.

It is a common misconception that repetition is necessarily boring, but the fact is when the challenge is clear and within the student's immediate grasp, the repetitions become a path to meeting that challenge. It is repetition without clear and attainable goals that is boring. Most games, athletic events or competitions are comprised by tasks that are repetitive, but because the objectives are clear and doable, the players view repetitions as just another chance to succeed.

Works Cited

(1) Suzuki Principles in Action. Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc. 2010.

(2) Suzuki Piano School, Volume 2. Summy-Birchard, Inc. (Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.). 2008.



**ASI Song Lyrics**

Sung to Lightly Row

ASI, ASI it's the camp I want to try.  
 Even get your practice done then watch the talent show for fun.  
 Guest recitals, kayaking, festivals and cold ice cream!  
 ASI, ASI it's the camp I want to try.

ASI, ASI it's the camp I want to try.  
 If you're 13 you can stay -- in the Teen Dorm for 5 days.  
 With your "ax" outside its case, you'll meet kids from every place. ASI...

ASI, ASI it's the camp I want to try.  
 Parents get a lesson too, like how to motivate re-view.  
 One-on-one time with your child, every year here is worthwhile. ASI...

ASI, ASI it's the camp I want to try.  
 Grow your skills, have fun, progress and begin to do your best.  
 People say it's magical, these Suzuki triangles. ASI...

Hip, Hip Hooray! 3X



**It's Festival Concert Preparation Time!**

The ASC Festival Concert, on Sunday, April 27 at Ben Franklin Junior High, is an opportunity for all of the ASC musicians and families to come together to make music. At this concert, each instrument area as a group prepares 8 minutes of music so that all students from the newest beginner to the most advanced have the chance to perform. Plan to stay afterward for the reception, a great chance to visit and celebrate with all the ASC families.

Our finale of course, is the Twinkle Variations played by approximately 250 musicians. For those three minutes of making beautiful music together, we can catch a glimpse of Dr. Suzuki's vision of a world in harmony. It's important that we put some extra "polish" on our pieces since this year's Festival

Concert will be dedicated to our former director, Dee Martz, who passed away on October 10, 2013.

#### Violin Repertoire

Tango Michael - M. McLean  
Country Dance – C. M. von Weber  
Gavotte in g minor – J. S. Bach  
Allegretto – S. Suzuki  
Long, Long Ago - T. H. Bayly  
Lightly Row – Folk Song  
Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D  
Twinkle Variations in D

#### Viola Repertoire

Sonata in g major, IV. Presto – B. Marcello  
Duo #26 - B. Bartok  
Humoresque/Swanee River Duet - A. Dvorak/S. Foster  
Chorus from Judas - G. F. Handel  
Andantino - S. Suzuki  
May Song - Folk Song  
French Folk Song - Folk Song  
Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D  
Twinkle Variations in D

#### Cello Repertoire

Allegro (from Sonata in C Major) - J. Brevet  
Gavotte - F. Gossec  
Andantino - Folk Song  
Twinkle Variation C - S. Suzuki  
Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D  
Twinkle Variations in D

#### Guitar

Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D  
Twinkle Variations in D

#### Voice

Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D  
Twinkle Variations in D

#### Harp

Cricket Song  
Lightly Row  
Lavender's Blue  
Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D  
Twinkle Variations in D



## Reflections of Margery Aber

March, 1979

It really doesn't matter how old one is to enjoy performing for others...nor even how advanced each of us is at a point in life, in abilities, unique to ourselves. We have been working toward an achievement, our achievement, and today is the day that we stand purposefully before a friendly, sympathetic audience. The aim is to play as perfectly as possible. Perfection is not the only thing, however. This minute or two is a culmination; a peak to be shared and all of us are to enjoy it, but especially the performer.

Adrenalin runs a bit higher than usual as a result of our eagerness to do well. For weeks, months, even years, preparation has been taking place at home and in the studio. The child, the parent, and the teacher have all worked together to build abilities, a foundation for the next steps. Today, our preparation includes coming early for tuning, getting dressed up special...and then the big moment!

The time for self-expression has come. Everyone feels the wonderful pulling for...the spark that bounces between performer and audience and back. It happens for each one, helping that individual to feel an even greater desire to play beautifully. Parents and teachers are the greatest supporter...and they have the right to be proud of their share in the performance.



### Winner of the Margery Aber Essay Contest

Congratulations to Marco Kurzynski, winner of the Margery Aber Essay Contest. Marco is 12 years old and received a \$50 Visa gift card, a copy of Miss Aber's book, *Hip, Hip Hooray!*, and read his essay at the ASC Faculty Recital.

MARGERY ABER ESSAY

By: Marco Kurzynski

"Margery Aber brought the Suzuki method to Stevens Point, and if it hadn't been for her, I would not



## Faculty News

Dolce members played a beautiful pre-concert performance prior to the ASC Faculty Recital on February 15. Thank you to **Gina Chung, Marco Kurzynski, Alyssa Schroeckenthaler, and Havilah Vang** for sharing their music with us!

The Troubadours and Friends performed during the intermission of the Community Theater at the Theater @1800 on Sunday, March 2. Bravo to Troubadours **Anna Hahn, William Hahn, Aiden Simons and Tatiana Van Tiem**, and to their friends, **Hope Stephani and Lucia Stephani** for your lively Celtic fiddling!

**Anna and William Hahn** performed a home concert that featured all of the pieces in Suzuki Book 2 on Saturday, March 1.

**Noah Kolinski** performed his violin for the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes at the Waupaca Learning Center on February 13.

Congratulations to **Ciana Rose** for an outstanding Senior recital.

Congratulations to the following students for attending the WSMA auditions: **Michael Treder, Roshini Traynor, Austin Konkol, Elena Jimenez McDermott, Gina Chung, Tom Felt, Catriona Quirk, Megan O'Brian, Lydia Ensminger, Ashley Hoerter, Katie Hoerter, Natalie Leek, Phil Grygleski, Ethan Liss, Mariah Studinski, and Caleb Kulich.**

Congratulations to **Tom Felt, Dale Steinmetz, Lydia Ensminger, Catriona Quirk, and Megan O'Brian** for their performances in the P. J. Jacobs production of *Where is Kilroy!*

Congratulations to **Natalie Leek and Michael Treder** for their performances in the SPASH production of *Bye Bye Birdie.*

Congratulations to **Austin Konkol, Amelia Beyer, Anneliese, Genevieve, Olivia and Gabrielle Heese** for their performances in the Central Wisconsin Children's Theater's production of *Aladdin Junior.*



**Ann Marie Novak and Jenny Burton** coordinated the Miss Aber 100th birthday celebration. Miss Burton in particular developed the essay contest; and Miss Novak put together the slide show.

**Jenny Burton** presented "String Instruments of the Orchestra" to the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes at the Waupaca Learning Center on February 13.

**Ms. Burton** also conducted the Troubadours at the intermission of the Community Theater on March 2.



## February 2014 Graduations

**Austin Koelemay, Cello Book 1**  
**Anna Meilahn, Voice Book 3**  
**Elisabeth Mahon, Cello Book 3**  
**Frederick Van Tiem, Violin Book 7**  
**Dinesh Traynor, Violin Book 10**  
**Jane Story, Violin Book 1**  
**Elena Jimenez McDermott, Voice Book 3**  
**Arielle Lewien, Cello Book 6**



An Early Sign of Spring's Approach!