

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 2005

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

I have gone to Puerto Rico three years in a row to work with Suzuki students in San Juan. Each year I am more impressed than the year before with the extraordinarily mature playing of the violin students of Susan Ashby, the founder of the Suzuki Method in Puerto Rico. The students play with big, beautiful sounds which are enriched by lush vibrato by early book 3. They are ready when asked to play any piece that they have learned from the Suzuki books no matter how much time has passed since they first studied it. In the process of making beautiful phrases they play all the dynamics and tempo changes found in the music. At first I wondered how this all happened. Does Susan Ashby only keep the students who are absolutely 100% committed to Suzuki study or is there something else going on?

After this most recent trip I am now sure that I understand the "secret." These students live the review and refine principle that is part of the Suzuki approach. Susan Ashby and her students rigorously follow Dr. Suzuki's advice. With this realization I pulled my file of articles by Dr. Suzuki and re-read the one titled "Raise Your Ability with a Piece You Can Play." It seems particularly pertinent at this time of year as we review for the Festival Concert so it is included in this issue of the Ambassador so that all of you can be inspired by Dr. Suzuki's own words. Happy reviewing!

Raise Your Ability With a Piece You Can Play Shinichi Suzuki

Not only in music but in every area, the success or failure of education depends on whether or not you carry out the "principle of fostering ability". Therefore those who don't know how to foster ability will be unable to raise children beautifully. And those who, not knowing how to foster ability, overlook the flaw in the traditional idea of ability as something "inborn", never fail to ask, "Does every child grow in the same way?" If they understand the "law of ability", such a strange question can never surface.

Babies in the stone age, without exception, all grew to have the heart, sensitivity, and ability of the stone age, despite differences in the environment of their growth. Whether in the heart, sensitivity, or ability, no one's upbringing will be totally identical with another's. Anyway, above all I would like you to know the "law of ability". How ability can be acquired and fostered, and how it can fail to form, is the first principle one needs to know of education.

Ability is the problem of the physiology of the big brain. The right hand of a right-handed person has acquired far better sensitivity, power, and other abilities than the left hand. These abilities developed in the right hand in the course of repeated training in what it can do. Please clearly understand that repeated practice of what one is capable of doing is the principle of fostering outstanding ability. Take calligraphy for example. If you have written a character five times, can you say you are through with that character because you can already write it? In order to refine your hand, you must compare what you have written with the model from which you

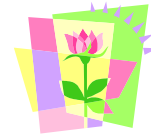
copied and write it many many times. Thus, the ability to write well gradually grows. I think you can understand the method of fostering fine ability from this example.

After a student has learned to play a piece, I tell him during the lesson, "Now that your preparation is complete, let's practice in order to build your ability. The lesson is just the beginning." I let him practice by comparing his performance with the record, or by playing along with the record. This serves to gradually foster musical rhythm, refined tonality, beautiful deportment. This the crux of my approach to fostering fine students. Only after the student has learned the piece, can the teacher begin to demonstrate his skill of fostering ability. Yet, some mothers who don't know this key point of Suzuki education think that "going to the next piece means becoming more advanced." All they want is to advance to a higher piece. Aiming at fostering fine ability, the teacher may try to zealously instruct according to the principle of "creating ability with a familiar piece the student can already play", but some mothers seem unhappy that he "just won't let us go forward."

Create fine ability with an old piece – if this method is carried out correctly, every child will grow splendidly. I would very much like the mothers of talent education members to understand this. It's like learning the mother tongue. A small child repeats what words he can say every day. He may seem slow at first, but he quickly increases his vocabulary by the time he is five or six and starts to jabber loquaciously. In the same way, while diligently working to enrich his ability using old pieces, a student will soon begin to display fine ability to go speedily ahead. The Suzuki method is the mother tongue method. We are practicing the same method as the education of the mother tongue, which never fails any child.

Please let your children listen well to the records, and work on creating inner ability at home. If a child does not listen to spoken Japanese, he will be a miserable speaker. "Listen and practice, listen and practice" – this is the same thing as "look at the model and

practice, look at the model and practice" in calligraphy. In any case, please think this over for your child, so that fine ability will grow. In other words, the Talent Education Center is a center for studying how to foster fine children. Therefore, I beg you members to study eagerly.



Composing the Jitters

By Kyoko Fuller

One of the great joys of Suzuki students is sharing their music with others in recitals. In our program, every student is given many opportunities to display their accomplishment in front of peers and parents. The benefits of playing in recitals are huge. Students are motivated to practice harder when they know that special day is coming up. And when it arrives and the student has played his or her best, parents and teachers share in the pride of a remarkable achievement. The funny thing is that as the students continue to progress and play more and more skillfully and as the anticipation of the next recital grows even greater, they get more serious about playing and the idea of anything going wrong in their performance becomes unbearable. And so the jitters begin.

A student who was nervous of playing solo recently said to me, "It is not really fair that when we play well the audience might be impressed, but they forget it very soon. But when we screw up badly, then they remember us for a long, long time!" That isn't really true, but I understand how this student was feeling. A musical performance occurs in the medium of time, and as we play, the music disappears. During the performance there simply isn't much of a chance to fix mistakes, because it is not a practice but a serious musical performance with an audience waiting to be impressed. That is the thought that brings fear to our minds. Is there some way we can recapture a happy and enthusiastic state of mind for performance

like we had when we were younger? Are there some ways to control the bad imaginations and bring quiet confidence back into our minds?

I remember clearly as yesterday when I tasted nervousness in my performance for the first time. Since then it comes and goes, and like the flu, it is not fully predictable. However, after examining my own performing experiences and observing others, I am convinced that it is controllable with the development of certain disciplines. The following points will illustrate some of these.

Strong preparation leads to dependable performance

All performers agree that best prevention for overcoming nervousness is to have a good period of diligent preparation. Get to know your music from top to the bottom, from inside out intellectually and emotionally. That's why it is not wise to perform the newest piece that you just learned. It may seem more exciting to play because it feels fresh and inspiring, but more cautious students are wiser to choose the piece that is more familiar and secure in their technique. I have been amused many times by students who were tired of daily practicing the same piece. But then at the recital, the music comes out with new expression and beauty. With the preparation of a stable technique, the student becomes freer to enlarge musical expression. Then they forget all about how much they were tired of that piece!

My son, Andrew, who went through many bouts of butterflies before his performances as a music student reported recently that he is a lot more confident as a professional violinist, especially for auditions. He said that it helps to know that there is nothing uncertain about what they are looking for. They are not judging him as a musician, but simply looking for a high level of accuracy and musicality. Diligent preparation leads to a sense of security concerning your ability, and this is key. Andrew is too busy to get nervous now, he says. It was a relief to hear how he has taken the offensive against the jitters since as a musician he will have many auditions ahead of him.

Creating musical character builds stable performance

A step beyond preparation is to understand the music and to work on recreating its character. The ability to express the character or mood of music is evidence of a higher level of mastery and it helps you overcome nervousness by allowing you to focus on the more subtle forms of expression instead of mechanical repetition. This is not a spontaneous thing as some people may think but comes through careful study and practice. A few months ago, ASTEC student, Ami Yamamoto, had the privilege to eat lunch with the famous violinist Midori and asked her how she would deal with stage fright in her performances. Midori's surprising answer was that she never had stage fright ever in her life. Then I remembered how her mother had written about Midori, that as a child, she would imagine stories about all the pieces she studied. When I saw her playing, it did seem clear that in her dramatic style that she brought out the dynamics, tonalities and phrasing, recreating the character of the music. No wonder she doesn't get nervous. She is so focused on bringing out her story! It is interesting that two well-known music clinicians, Kato Havas, author of *Stage Fright* and Julie L. Lieberman, author of *The Violin in Motion*, have each written on the special power of imagination to enable freedom in performance.

Good health and plenty of rest will allow the best performance

The apprehension that settles on the older students we often attribute to self-consciousness, and no doubt that is part of it. But sometimes the conditions are more basic than that. As students grow older, their duties in school become more involved and the stresses of school and social life wreak havoc with moods and sleep. Students are busier than ever and are trying to push more and more activities in a limited amount of time. Simple tiredness is one of the greatest enemies of a good performance that I know. Sickness I have seen overcome, but weariness can easily ruin the spirit to play well. Physical burnout affects a musician's spirit, memory and coordination and that condition quickly makes one vulnerable to stage anxiety. Though I know this

will fall on deaf ears in our frantic culture, remember to stay well rested, not just on performance day, but on preparation days, as well, so that your mind will be in peace as you approach the recital.

Be in touch with your body while you are playing.

A confident performer has a stage presence and manner that helps the performance. This is not for show. Poise and convincing body movement communicated to the audience help keep all aspects of the performance under control. Natural flowing body movement is part of musicality that every musician must study because it has obvious connections with reducing nervousness.

Learning about your breathing is vital to the musical flow in your technique. Try to consciously let go of your body and move with the rhythm, the dynamics and the phrasing. Practice body movements that physically make sense with the sound production. For instance for violin and viola playing, in order to produce loud tone, you raise the instrument slightly higher by straighten up your back so that the strings go up against the bow which creates the resistance in bow. Moving instrument toward upper to the left as you play the down bow stroke and moving instrument slightly lower to the right on the up bow stroke will increase bow speed and produce brighter tone color. And there are more body movements for music making. Body movement helps to flex your joints all over the body. Proper breathing gives oxygen to the blood that helps the body function and to be more relaxed. You will be surprised to discover how often you may be holding your breath when you trying to get through a difficult passage. But in performance that is very costly. After all, your body is a big part of the instrument you are learning to play!

Accept yourself and other conditions that are given to you at the performance place.

One of the most destructive approaches to performance is the attempt to prove your ability. Performance is not a test of your accomplishment, even in auditions. It is really a moment of celebration of the music and of your achievement to perform it. Your ability to play has been already tested and proved by countless practice sessions. How other

people judge your skills is not your business to worry about, especially at the recital. Be content in your mind to know that you are well able to do that which you have already done successfully 1,000 times before and do not expect more.

Acceptance of limitations must also be extended to conditions of environment for the recital or audition. Acoustics, space limitations, a different kind of audience are a few of the surprises that may get thrown your way. Do not struggle against those things that you have no control over. Guard your spirit by accepting whatever conditions you have for your recital and put your focus back on the celebration that is your performance.

To illustrate this point, just as I was writing this, a newsflash came in. My student Roy Meyer auditioned for the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra Young Artist State Wide Concert Competition. He came back with the happy award of the Highly Commended Honor out of 32 contestants. In the audition, he was to play two pieces in front of three judges. He said that he did not play the first piece at his best (Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso by Saint-Saens) and that was to be his main piece. But he decided just to accept the fact and play his second piece (from Mendelssohn Concerto) with enjoyment. He played with excellence and had so much fun! He was nervous-free at that point.

Some thoughts on self consciousness

Until I came to the USA, I never saw stage fright among young students. I thought it was very interesting difference between American and Japanese students. A common question heard here is "Are you nervous?" In Japan, that question is almost never asked and would seem strange. I think it may have something to do with the heightened sense of self-consciousness among young students in America. This self-consciousness leads to nervousness in performance.

Something from Japanese culture may be valuable to learn in helping overcome this kind of problem which is the focus on specific actions and attitudes instead of persons. Japanese teachers and parents do not

generally praise students with such comments like "You are terrific!" or "You did it!" or "You are so amazing!" "I can't believe, you are so smart!" to make students feel good. But instead they focus on the actions with praises like: "It went pretty good", "It was very satisfying", "It worked very well because you did as teacher said." When the student needs to do better or to be challenged, they say "Ganbattel!" which means, "keep trying hard!" They avoid any statements regarding the child's personal qualities. It is part of the culture to be careful to give praise only to truly accomplished people. Japanese educators do not believe that motivation comes from self-esteem or "feeling-good-about-yourself" philosophy. Dr. Suzuki constantly encouraged parents to give children praise, yet he meant it to be words of encouragement and positive comments and environment more than personal praises. This difference in culture is profound yet not well understood here in America. In Japan, to praise the student personally would be considered a form of flattery that would not help the student to grow. In cases of self-consciousness, this approach may help students here, too.



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

Viola students should plan to attend the March and April Marathons so that we can be very well prepared for the April 24 Festival Concert and Dean McKenna's retirement party on April 29. We will be playing viola ensembles and pieces from the Suzuki Books. An exact review list that will fit easily in your case will be distributed by your teacher.



Ensemble of the North

Ensemble of the North presents "Saints and Sinners: Music of the Faithful", Saturday, March 12, 2005, 4:00 P.M. at the Episcopal Church of the Intercession in Stevens Point.



"Saints and Sinners: Music of the Faithful" will feature an evening of sacred masterworks from the past and present. In addition to Poulenc's Four Motets for a Time of Penitence, this concert will feature the music of Britten, Bruckner and Stevens Point's own, **Abbie Betinis**. Betinis, a Pacelli High School alumna and local Suzuki piano graduate, holds a degree in music theory and composition from St. Olaf College. Currently a graduate student in music composition at the University of Minnesota, she has studied in Paris with faculty from Julliard, the Paris Conservatory, and l'Ecole Normale de Musique. Her choral works have been commissioned by the American Suzuki Foundation, Cantus, Kantorei (Colorado), and the Dale Warland Singers, among others. Abbie's works have been performed on Minnesota and National Public Radio, and in Austria, France, California, Colorado, New York, and across the Midwest. Featured at the concert will be her *Carmina mei cordis* and *Dormi Jesu*.

Newly founded and based in Minneapolis, MN, Ensemble of the North is a chamber vocal ensemble of 12 professional singers.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students and can be purchased at the door. The Church of the Intercession is located at 1417 Church Street, Stevens Point.

For additional information please visit the website at www.ensembleofthenorth.org or contact Patrick McDonough, Artist Director, at 612.387.6328.



Notes from the Endpin

By Lawrence Leviton

April should be an exciting month in the cello studio. **Emily Gruselle** and **Jamie Davis** will be giving their senior recitals. Both are putting together interesting and challenging programs and I would like to invite you and your families to their programs. Emily and Jamie have developed into wonderful cellists. They have worked tremendously hard to develop their skills and they have contributed to the cello studio and the ASTEC program and have been a great inspiration to other students in the studio. They have followed some of the same musical paths in the past few years; both have attended ASI in Stevens Point, have participated in the Green Lake Music Festival and have been performers in the state honors orchestra. They have both been selected to receive four year music scholarships to UW-Madison next year where they will major in music. Bravo Emily and Jamie!

Emily's recital will take place on Saturday April 9th at 4:30. She will be accompanied by David Becker

Jamie's recital will take place on Saturday April 30th at 7:30. He will be accompanied by Tom Yang.

Please note a time change for Cello Marathons for the remainder of the year.

Pre-Twinkle Group 9-9:30

Books 1-3 9:30 until cookie break

Books 4 and up-cookie break until 12



A Stop-Gap Measure and a Note of Thanks

By Remya Traynor

Technology can be a blessing and a curse. Sometimes it can be a distraction and consume practice time. In this case, it was a useful tool and

resource. Videotaping lessons can be done each week and provide an aural and visual model of what the player should sound and look like. It can be a helpful reference (like having a lesson everyday) during those moments of doubt and an mediator for those discussions about just what exactly the teacher said. Here another instance of how the video can be used; certainly, no substitute for weekly lessons, but a viable alternative in unusual circumstances -PD.

This past semester, I took our two children to Singapore to visit my family. At the beginning, I was little hesitant, because I was worried about my daughter's violin practice. She is doing well now, but had she not practiced for two months, she might have forgotten what she had learned. I talked with Professor Pat, and she told me that she would tape a few new pieces, and we would follow the tape and practice. I was not sure how it would work, but I thought it was worth a try.

We followed the tape practice almost every day. It worked very well; Roshini learned more, and she was very happy about the tape, because she could see Prof. Pat all the time. What I did was watch the tape first; then I wrote down all the notes, and Roshini and I watched the tape together. When we practiced, we followed the tape-step by step; it worked really well. Thank you, Professor Pat for this innovative method of instruction. It was a type of stop-gap measure that allowed Roshini and me to practice new material during our trip. We enjoyed our vacation. Instead of forgetting skills that she had learned, Roshini was able to practice violin during our trip and develop more of her musical skills.



Wanted!

1/16 and 3/4 violin and bow. Please contact Lee Harmon at 715-295-0684.

Alumni News

The Brainerd School District was named Minnesota's 2004 Meritorious Orchestra Program by the Minnesota String and Orchestra Teachers Association this past December. ASTEC alumnus **Leslie Zander** has been the director of five middle school orchestras since she was hired in 2000. She works with the founder of the string program, Grant Wilcox, who conducts five middle and high school orchestras. Brainerd boasts a population of about 13,000 residents.



Come One, Come All!

Parent Information Session for first or second year parents in the program, as well as "experienced" parents in the program. Stop in and enjoy a lively discussion and indulge in the "Angel Food and Decaf" experience.

April 19, 2005, 7:30 pm
Suzuki House, Room 107
Topic: The Practicing Environment

Brief presentations will be followed by Q & A and discussion. Bring your questions and your ideas.



Jessica Ryan to Present Senior Recital

Jessica Ryan will present her senior violin recital on Sunday, March 6th at 2:00 p.m. at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Schofield, Wisconsin. She will be assisted by pianist David Becker, her teacher and violinist

Kyoko Fuller, her mother and pianist Melody Ryan, and vocalist Bob Strand.

The program will consist of a wide variety of pieces with contrasting musical styles, including Bartok's Rumanian Folk Dances, the Bach Double – 2nd Movement, Kreisler's Praeludium and Allegro, Haru no Umi (The Sea in Spring Time) by Miyagi, traditional and contemporary Christian music for the season of Lent, and two pieces popularized by singer Josh Groban - You Raise Me Up and Mi Mancherai. Jessica will conclude the program by playing two movements of the Bruch Concerto in G Minor - the beautiful and moving Adagio and the exciting Finale.

Jessica began her musical studies on the piano at the age of 5 and took private lessons from two teachers, LuAnn Stensberg and Janet Sturm, over a period of 7 years. She was first introduced to the violin at the age of 10 through the D.C. Everest Public Schools Strings Program with teacher Ann Johnson. Because of her passion for the instrument, she began studying privately with teacher Amy Ehle at the Wausau Conservatory of Music. After a year and a half of lessons, Amy and her husband relocated to Texas, and Jessica found herself with no teacher at all. When Jessica was 12, Kyoko Fuller graciously offered to take her in to her violin studio, and Jessica has had the wonderful opportunity of studying with her for the last 5 years. Jessica and her family will always be extremely grateful to Kyoko and the rest of the ASTEC faculty for the fantastic educational experiences and encouragement they have given her during the last several years. ASTEC is truly a special place with very talented and nurturing teachers who help each child in his/her own unique development as a musician.

Presently Jessica is in the process of auditioning for music schools at several colleges. She is considering majoring in violin performance and eventually studying Suzuki pedagogy. Jessica would also like to continue her studies in the area of art.



Student News

Emily Gruselle performed the Kabalevsky Concerto with the Fox Valley Youth Symphony on March 6th.

Jamie Davis performed in the Splash production of the *Titanic*.

Solo and Ensemble Participants:

James Banovetz

Will Mitchell

Chris Peck

Jamie Davis

Emily Gruselle

Jesse Nummelin

Kiel Hausler

Peter Munck

Roy Meyer received the Highly recommended honor award in Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra's second annual state-wide young artist concerto competition that was held on February 6 in Madison.

Jessica Ryan is giving her senior recital at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Schofield at 2:00 pm, March 6th.



February 2005 Graduates

Nadia Qutaishat, Violin Book 3

Parisa Vaezzadeh, Violin Book 5

Emma Sands, Violin Book 5

Teresita Marchel, Violin Book 3

Will Mitchell, Cello Book 3

Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 12th, Marathon Saturday

Violins: UC Encore Room

NFAC Room 283: CSCO

NFAC Room 287: Pianos

Suzuki House 107: Pianos

NFAC Room 290: Celli

Suzuki House: Voice and viola

Sunday, March 13th, Solo Recitals, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, UC Alumni Room

Saturday, April 9th, Marathon Saturday (piano only)

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

Saturday, April 23rd, Marathon Saturday (except piano)

Sunday, April 24th, String & Voice Festival Concert, 2:00 pm, Michelsen Hall

Saturday, May 14th, Solo & Ensemble Concert, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

Saturday, May 14th, CSCO Concert, 7:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

Sunday, May 15th, Piano Festival Concert, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall.

