

AMBASSADOR

Aber Suzuki Center

University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point
College of Fine Arts and Communication

*Changing lives by providing the best in performance,
creativity, and expression*

April 2006

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

The excitement started from the moment that the Aber Suzuki Center faculty decided to invite the Fry Street Quartet (FSQ) to UWSP. Our hopes and dreams were enormous. With all the plans and anticipation I spent months wondering what it would really be like to have these fine musicians working with students in Stevens Point. Frankly as each day of their visit unfolded I got more and more excited.

The FSQ spent several hours Thursday rehearsing in NFAC 361 and Michelsen Hall. News travels fast in the UWSP music student community and soon many became aware that something special was going on. Many students managed walk very slowly by the rehearsal rooms so that they could hear this fine group at work.

Then, on Friday the Fry Street group spent time with students in the junior high orchestras in Stevens Point. It is absolutely amazing how much change can take place in just a few minutes when eager students are inspired to work with extra concentration on producing a musical result.

Saturday was Suzuki Day for the FSQ. Every group wished that they had time to practice longer and work harder with the members of the quartet.

After the performance on Sunday I heard--

"Awesome!"

"WOW!"

"Gee Whiz—how did they do that?"

"Who ever knew that 'Meow, meow, meow, and meow' could be so fascinating?"

"All I want to do is get into the practice room. They inspired me to take care of every tiny detail in each phrase."

"It is fascinating to just watch them watch each other when they perform."

"They make everything look so easy and sound so good."

"Did you see that bow arm?"

"Even when her part has the same note over and over again she impels the music."

"They are fine musicians and nice people. Boy did we luck out."

And then on Monday,

"It seems as if we have been friends for a long time. I miss them already."

Thank you Jessica, Becky, Russell and Ann.



Stop Hearing; Start Listening

By Kyoko Fuller

My husband was raised without much music in his family, and he used to say that classical music sounded like a lot of blaring noise to him. However, as he began to listen more seriously to folk and rock music in college, he found his musical tastes growing beyond what was becoming too familiar, and to his own surprise, began to include some pieces of classical music. He started to enjoy music of the Baroque period and to enjoy the distinct qualities of sound that different instruments made. Soon he was appreciating the different styles of classical composers and even took a course of music appreciation in college. Over the years, without any special training, his love for music continued to grow. The key has always been the same, a simple habit of careful listening. From the time we met, I have always been impressed with his sensitivity to music, but as he said, it wasn't always that way. He trained his ear to go beyond mere hearing of sound and melody. Though he does not play an instrument, his love of music and ability to listen was a great benefit to our children's musical growth.

I have often been asked about what motivated our two younger sons, former Suzuki students and now professional violinists. Did my ambition as Suzuki mother and teacher push them to practice longer and work harder? That is clearly not true, because they had been only average students in their elementary years. It was only when they reached junior high school grades that they each became self motivated and began to push themselves to practice beyond what I would ever have expected. It is true that in their younger years, Mom and Dad required them to do their practice before their playtime, just about everyday, but it wasn't their favorite activity by a long shot! But something happened to them that went beyond discipline and practice. Some of it was the camaraderie they shared with each other and with fellow Suzuki students who were working towards recitals. Some of it was the excitement of the Suzuki Institute and even more friends excited about playing the violin. But I have to think there was a special magic, that unfortunately is increasingly missing in busy Suzuki families, which is the practice and love of listening to classical music. In our house, Joshua Bell and Gil Shaham were the real rock stars! And Joel and Andrew practiced, not just to master some new technical skill or to play through a piece without obvious mistake, but to become part of that musical community of composers and performers who delight in the beauty of music well played.

We should remember that it was one of Dr. Suzuki's great convictions that we learn from the great artists in their recordings. At the Matsumoto Institute in Japan, he used to gather the teacher trainees to the concert hall, which had an excellent sound system, and we would listen together to the recordings of great musical performances. The lights were turned low so that we could soak up the sound without distraction and absorb the artistry of wonderful music. It was such a welcome relief from the daily hustle and bustle, but even more, these listening sessions trained our ears to hear more accurately the language of music and helped to inspire us to play our own instruments more beautifully. Afterwards, Dr. Suzuki would ask us what we had learned in the recording from the master teacher, saying of himself with his usual humility, "I

am just an assistant teacher."

At the Suzuki Institute in Matsumoto, there was a kindergarten filled with lively little children. Between their busy activities they would all take short breaks and listen to classical music. All the children would rest their heads on their desks and quietly listen for 10 minutes or so. I really don't know what they learned in those short listening sessions while their excited little minds were turned to focus on the beauty and richness of classical music. Did these listening sessions make any difference in their learning ability? I am not sure, but it certainly became a part of the environment that nurtured their minds beautifully. How often we forget that our world is filled with sounds, many of them horrifying. Let us try harder to fill our homes and schools with beautiful sounds whenever we can, especially for the youngest children.

We need to encourage a healthy environment that fosters good listening. A music professor I really admire expressed his thoughts about this subject when we visited him at Madeline Island in early summer at the music camp he directs. We were all sitting on the deck of his cabin in complete quietness looking at the stillness of Lake Superior on a perfectly calm day and he started saying that we could all be much better musicians if the world was quieter. Just imagine, he went on, how the world was when Bach, Mozart and Schubert and all other great old composers had lived. There were no cars or planes or all the other noisy inventions that surround us today. They were much better able to hear beautiful melodies with great ideas from inside their hearts and from the very beat of nature! It is so wonderful to be in a quiet place like Madeline Island! As we were all nodding our heads, thoughts of my own childhood came into my mind as we continued to talk of the sound of streams and birds singing, etc. Of course, I am not as old as Bach, but my early environment was still wonderfully quiet. There were no computer games, TV, movies and screaming loud music. And I remember childhood very fondly. I had a lot of time to listen to music and dreamed in music. I enjoyed watching the clouds move all kind of shapes in the sky like young people watch TV now. Oh what fun it was! The sound of streams and birds are like music. Surely Bach and Mozart would prefer their own time than the modern world. Perhaps the point I am making is that classical music makes more sense and speaks to the imagination of our hearts when we cultivate a quieter environment.

My purpose in writing this article is to encourage more Suzuki parents to enjoy listening to good music for its own exceeding value. Because of the frenzied character of our time, it requires of us a little extra discipline to reserve time for quieter pastimes. After a weekend sporting event, don't immediately rush into another bustling activity, but seek a real break in your time to listen at home or in your car to a new recording of classical music. (Remember that Ipods can play classical music too!) Make some plans around an activity involving music. For instance, go out to dinner with your friends and family and then afterwards enjoy the evening at the CWSO Symphony Concert. Though your children may not at first appreciate the whole concert, they will treasure the activity and come to love it. To become a real fan of classical music takes discipline just like learning how to watch a sporting event like football. When I first came to Wisconsin, I didn't know a thing about the game

and it was completely confusing to me. But as my children showed me the different rules and challenges I came to enjoy watching the games on Sunday afternoon. It's no different with classical music.

If you don't know where to begin, then ask your teacher for some recommendations of recordings, but don't wait, start listening now! As you listen to a recording at home or on the public radio station and then hear it again in a concert, you will be surprised at how you begin to have a special feeling of friendship for that piece or that composer or that performer, and you will begin to notice new details every time you hear it. You may not know yet how it was composed or where it was first played or any number of other particulars surrounding the piece, but what is important is you are tasting the special joy of listening to classical music. And you will be creating a wonderful environment of sound for your Suzuki student even as you enjoy classical music in your home.



Notes From the Endpin

By Lawrence Leviton

Wow! What a weekend of cello and string playing. Many professional string players say that one of their favorite things to do with their music is to play string quartets with friends. After seeing the Fry Street Quartet in person and seeing them work with our students and make chamber music, I couldn't agree more. Congratulations to all of you who were able to participate in the Fry Street weekend.

As you know, the Festival Concert is fast approaching. Again, here is the Cello Program for the concert:

Breval Sonata in C Major-First Movement
Scherzo-Webster
Go Tell Aunt Rhody
French Folk Song

Have a great spring!



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

Those of you who attended the Fry Street Quartet Concert may have noticed that Russell Fallstad's has a special technique to make sure that his mellow viola sound is heard no matter how much was going on in the quartet. Russell, like many other violists in professional quartets, sits on the outside of the group. This means that his "f" holes face the back of the stage, sending most of his sound away from the audience. But Russell uses a well known trick to overcome this disadvantage.

He swings his scroll out toward the audience whenever he has an especially important part.

The first violist that I saw swing out like this was Boris Kroyt of the world famous Budapest Quartet. When he swung out it he did it so quickly that it interfered with the listener's ability to concentrate on the music. In fact it almost made me laugh out loud. Fortunately Russell has refined the technique so that the movement is more subtle. It takes a lot of practice to get comfortable facing away from your partners in a quartet just at all the most important moments but it definitely helps with the musical balance. After years of working on it Russell seems to have mastered the turn out technique so that we could enjoy his warm viola sound.



Parent Education Sessions

The following Parent Education sessions will be held, 7:30 pm in NFAC 361. All Suzuki parents/guardians are welcome.

April 11 – "The Art of Reviewing With a Purpose"



Faculty News

On March 12, Tom Yang assisted David Story on a Double-Bass Faculty recital in Michelsen Hall.

Dee Martz served as clinician at the Taller Anual (annual Suzuki workshop) in San Juan, Puerto Rico February 18-21.

On April 3rd, **Lawrence Leviton**, **Dee Martz** and Steve Bjella assisted flautist Paul Doebler in a performance of the Mozart Quartet K. 370.



Student News

WSMA Participants: **Allison Patchett**, **Ann Marie Kosmoski**, **Navneeth Iyengar**, **Jonathan Cochrane**, **Stacey Rolak**, **Kelley Rolak**, **Lawrence Andersen**, **Maria Marchel**, **Emily Spaid**.

Kelley Rolak has been accepted as a member of the Wisconsin All-State High School Honors Orchestra. They will perform at the state music convention next October.

Congratulation to the following students who have practiced 100 or more consecutive days: **Lauren Lila, Teresita Marchel, Maria Marchel, Dinesh Traynor.**

The following students practice for one whole year or more without missing a day. These are their totals at press time: **Craig Felt - 575 days, Tom Felt - 540 days, Anjali Iyengar - 725 days, Rachel Ley - 500 days, Roshini Traynor - 730 days.**



March 2006 Graduates

Antony Van Tiem, Violin Book 3
John Peck, Violin Twinkle
Teddy Schenkman, Violin Book 4
Alan Kiepert, Violin Book 3
Greta Meidl-Westegaard, Piano Book 1
Wade Dittburner, Violin Book 5
Michael Crump, Violin Book 5
Ben Karbowski, Violin Book 6
Birgen Johnson, Piano Book 1
Brittney Van Dyke, Piano Twinkle
Keith Kunze, Piano Twinkle



Alumni News



Abbie Betinis, Minneapolis, daughter of John and Emily Betinis of Amherst Junction, is the winner of the University of Minnesota School of Music's 2005 Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize. The national competition is open to composers in the earlier stages of their careers and is held in a continuing three-year cycle rotating among works for Chorus, Wind Ensemble, and Orchestra.

Betinis' composition, titled **Toward Sunshine, Toward Freedom: Songs of Smaller Creatures**, is a nine-minute, three-movement work for a cappella chorus. Each movement is an imaginative, tone-poem depicting creatures from the natural world: *I. The Bees' Song (Walter de la Mare)*, *II. A noiseless patient spider (Walt Whitman)*, *III. Envoi (Charles Swinburne)*.

Toward Sunshine, Toward Freedom will have its full premiere by the University of Minnesota Chamber Singers under the direction of Professor Kathy Romey on March 26, 2006 at the Cathedral of Saint Paul, Saint Paul, Minnesota. The composer

will also present a masterclass on her music to graduate students. The \$1,500 prize will be awarded formally at the occasion of the work's premiere.

Betinis, 26, has written music in a variety of genres, but her central interest is in composing for the voice, resulting in an extensive catalogue to date of music for solo, chamber, and mixed vocal ensembles. Betinis is a Composer-in-Residence at the St. Paul based Schubert Club. She is a freelance singer, music copyist, and web-designer and also a writer for the internet magazine ComposersOnline.org. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from St. Olaf College, and is a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in music composition from the University of Minnesota.

The 2005 Swan Composer Prize was judged in two tiers, with the participation of Twin Cities area composers, and with the composition faculty and choral conductors Dr. Dale Warland and Professor Kathy Romey from the University of Minnesota School of Music. All entries remain anonymous throughout the entire two-tier adjudication process. The competition was administered by Professor Judith Lang Zaimont, of the School of Music composition faculty.



Upcoming Events

Tuesday, April 11th, Parent Education Session – The Art of Reviewing With a Purpose, NFAC 361, 7:30 pm

Saturday, April 29th, Marathon (except Piano)

Saturday, April 29th, Christian Czernicki Senior Recital, 7:30 pm, NFAC 221

Sunday, April 30th, String & Voice Festival Concert, 2:00 pm, Ben Franklin Junior High School Auditorium

Friday, May 12th, Kayla Provisor Senior Recital, 7:00 pm, Michelsen Hall

Saturday, May 13th, Solo & Ensemble Concert, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

Saturday, May 13th, CSCO Concert, 7:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

Sunday, May 14th, Piano Festival Concert, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

