

AMBASSADOR

Aber Suzuki Center

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

December 2006

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

On Sunday nearly 50 students performed on the Suzuki recitals. The programs were filled with everything from Twinkles to pieces way beyond the books. There was even a violin orchestra and a string quartet. I was thrilled to be present for such a fine showing from so many students.

Once again the experience of planning the programs and the rehearsal schedule made it obvious that I need to take the time to let you all in on the various factors that get considered when organizing these monthly events. ASC faculty members set policies that help define expectations for recital weekends. Because families are so busy we often get requests, many at the very last minute, that are difficult to honor. This leaves Christine, me and particularly the accompanists in the middle. I am confident that with a greater understanding of the whole picture many of you will realize how big an impact the many "small and simple" requests can have on a recital weekend.

When your teacher determines that the time is right for you to play on an ASC recital the following things are set into motion:

1) At least two weeks before the recital the teacher turns in the completed recital form. The accompanists must be informed sooner if the piece is not from the Suzuki repertoire so that they will have ample time to learn their part to the music. Although the recital forms have a place to indicate whether the recommendation is for the 2:00 or the 3:30 recital, the expectation is that a request for a specific recital time will be quite unusual. Asking the families to be flexible allows us to schedule siblings together and then divide up the music to make two equal programs. It also allows us to give consideration to the demands made on the accompanists. As you can imagine, recitals are much more interesting for the audience if we have no more than two or three performances of the same piece on one program.

2) Two weeks before the recitals David Becker, Ann Marie Novak and Tom Yang meet to divide up the accompanying. They plan carefully so that there will be time to prepare. Yes, I mean practice the parts! Part of the "dividing up" process is based on creating a rehearsal and performance work load for the accompanists that is not excessively demanding.

3) One week before the recitals the programs are typed and the rehearsal schedule is organized. Because the Piano Marathons begin at 11:00, all of the students who are being accompanied by Ann Marie and Tom rehearse before cookie break. Because Central State Chamber Orchestra rehearses at 9:00, all of the students being accompanied by David Becker rehearse after the cookie break. This kind of schedule means that rehearsal times are not all that flexible.

4) On Monday before the recitals a list is posted that indicates which students are playing with each collaborative pianist and the assigned recital time. The newly set policy was established to improve communication. The lists are also posted on the Suzuki web pages.

5) On recital day Ann Marie, Tom and David work hard to stay completely focused so that they will have the flexibility to follow whatever happens as each student performs. The rest of us sit back, relax and marvel at the accomplishments of the ASC students.

During the last several months it seems that when Christine or Lynn have called to inform the families of the rehearsal and recital schedule at least ten or fifteen families make a request for a different recital time or a special rehearsal time with full expectation that these requests can be filled with no problem. There have also been requests to change pieces. Unfortunately because there are so many things to consider these simple seeming requests are often not that simple to manage.

To help recital weekends run more smoothly the ASC faculty has agreed to the following expectations:

1) All students who are performing with an accompanist provided by ASC must come to their assigned rehearsal time on Saturday morning. Sunday rehearsal times are made only for those few families who have religious conflicts because they celebrate Saturday as the Sabbath.

2) Requests for a specific recital time should be infrequent.

3) Students who have conflicts on Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon should probably wait and perform on a different weekend.

4) Performances are celebrations of the student's accomplishments and as such deserve a high priority on the selected weekend. Squeezing the performances in between multiple other activities is discouraged.



Learn to be Your Own Teacher

By Mary Hofer

Learning to become one's own teacher is an important aspect of everyone's education.

In his book, Discover Your Voice, Dr. Oren Brown says, "Be your own teacher whenever you are on your own."

I remember my college days. I would practice what I thought my teacher had told me to do but I seldom listened to myself. I always relied on what my teacher, accompanist, or friends advised me to do. My teacher, like Dr. Brown, would always tell me to tape my lessons and become my own teacher.

When children learn to teach themselves – to search for answers on their own – they can apply this skill to every other area of their lives now and in the future.

But how can we as parents help our children acquire the skills necessary to become their own teachers? Children are amazingly adept at watching and learning what is right and what is wrong.

First, we must provide opportunities for children to attend concerts, watch videos, and listen to a variety of musical recordings. Take time to discuss the differences in the recordings – both positive and not so positive. What about musical differences? Dynamics? Tempi? Tone? Phrasing? Even very young children can ascertain what is correct alignment, beautiful tone or musical.

Secondly, it is important for children to watch and listen to themselves. Ask them what they believe they are doing well

and what they think has "opportunity for improvement." Ask, "How can we improve?" Take time to reflect on what was covered in the lesson. Ask, "What do we know that could help us do better?" It may help your child to record and listen to bits and pieces or small sections of his or her piece rather than recording the entire song. Often, when one part improves, the improvement carries into the rest of the music.

Today's technologies give our students a wide variety of options for recording themselves – videotape, audiotape, on a CD and/or MP3 player. These are all wonderful tools. A parent or teacher can correct a child's performance but it is a much more powerful learning experience when the child decides to correct himself or herself.

Thirdly, make time for mental preparation. Before students begin to play or sing, stop and ask what, specifically, he or she is working on in the piece or song. Is there a technical problem or skill to be focused upon and how will he or she address it? What musical aspects are we trying to achieve? It is very helpful for the child to think through the music before making a sound. Set goals for achievement before beginning.

In conclusion, if we as parents can create an environment where children can objectively look at their own work and set goals for themselves at each practice, we are on the road to helping our children become their own teacher as well as a more independent and confident person!



NEWS FLASH!

By Dee Martz

Jeff Morin, Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication is the new owner of the Suzuki House. It is so good to learn that someone is going to love that wonderful old house. After about six months of renovations it may even change its name to the Morin House, although in my mind it will always be the Suzuki House. The basement will become his art studio with room enough for printing presses. The other floors will become his home and allow him plenty of space, including parking, for the kind of entertaining expected of a Dean. I wonder if there will be sounds of Twinkle in that house forever. I guess that we will just have to ask.



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

Occasionally at the beginning of lessons I remark "Your viola is happy today." Admittedly it is a strange thing to say but I find it an almost involuntary response to an instrument that sounds significantly better than it usually does. Because I am clearly reacting to changes in the instrument and not the preparation of the player you may wonder how can a viola change from day to day. Fortunately the answer is simple. It is the materials from which violas are made that allow for these changes.

At this time of year the most obvious change is the way the pegs fit. Pegs that were a bit difficult to turn during the summer may even begin slipping now that furnaces are running. While how the pegs fit does not significantly affect the sound of the instrument, the same phenomena accounts for changes in both pegs and tone. That phenomenon is the water content of the wood from which the instrument is made.

In order to understand why this is true it is necessary to understand how viola sound is made. The bow pulls across the string initiating the vibrations. The string passes the vibrations along to the bridge which sets the top of the instrument in motion. Vibrations from the top of the instrument pass through the sound post to the back of the instrument and soon everything is vibrating. Surrounded by moving wood the air inside the instrument vibrates wildly and amplifies the sound. The vibrating wood moves the surrounding outside air and "f" holes provide an opening for the amplified inside sound to escape. Because the amount of water in the wood effects how tightly the instrument fits together and especially how tightly the sound post fits, it effects the amount that the different parts of the instrument vibrate. All these minute changes add up to noticeable differences in the quality and quantity of the sound itself. On those occasions when "your viola is happy" the combination of changes creates an ideal vibrating mechanism for the specific qualities of your instrument. The sound is large, free and glorious.

Violas and all string instruments are happier when they are surrounded by 40-60% humidity in the air and are in a temperature that is comfortable for humans in light clothing. In our climate of extreme temperatures it is necessary to pay careful attention to where and how instruments are stored. Following are a few rules that will keep your viola healthy and happy.

1. If you are considering leaving your instrument in the car, do so only if you would be comfortable in the closed car without a jacket or air conditioning. Remember that even on cool days the interior of a car may become uncomfortably warm if it is parked in a sunny location. FYI--I never leave my viola in the car.

2. Store your instrument away from direct sunlight, heat and cooling vents.

3. If the luthier from whom you purchased the instrument recommends the use of "dampits" during the winter make sure that you keep those little green snakes filled with water all the time.

The rich sound of the viola is what attracts me so I want do all I can to keep my instrument happy. I hope that you will do the same.



Winter Weather

During times of severe winter weather, the following stations will be notified of UWSP closings: WSPT, WIZD, WYTE, WFHR, WDUX, WDLB, TV Channel 7, and TV Channel 9. Information will also be available by calling University Information at 715-346-0123. In the event you hear that the University is closed, you can assume the ASC program is also closed, however the University closes only under the most extreme weather conditions. If the University is not closed, whether or not to reschedule lessons due to the weather is up to the individual teacher.

If we feel there is a need to cancel a Marathon or recital due to severe weather, the stations listed above will be notified.

If you need to cancel your child's lesson for any reason, it would be helpful to the teacher if you leave a message on his or her voice mail rather than the Suzuki general number. Direct telephone numbers to each studio are listed in the Holiday Office Hours article, and also at the top of the ASC Faculty & Family list included in this mailing.



Openings for Piano and Viola

The Aber Suzuki Center currently has immediate openings for piano and viola students. For more information, please call the Suzuki Office at 715-346-3033.

Holiday Office Hours

If you need to contact a faculty member between December 21st and January 3rd, please call them directly. Faculty members do not access the 346-3033 Suzuki Office voice mail box, and will not receive messages left at that number. Faculty may periodically check their studio voice mail during the holidays.

	<u>Studio No.</u>
Dee Martz	346-2805
David Becker	346-4902
Pat D'Ercole	346-4938
Kyoko Fuller	346-4951
Mary Hofer	346-4921
Lawrence Leviton	346-4555
Ann Marie Novak	346-4889
Tom Yang	346-4977



December 2006 Graduates

Neal Wisinski, Piano Twinkle
Trenton Seegert, Cello Book 1
Sarah Harmon, Violin Book 2
Sam Ginnett, Voice Book 2
Bryce Marion, Violin Book 4
Rachel Reichert, Violin Book 4
Parisa Vaezzadeh, Violin Book 6
Michael Josephson, Violin Book 8
Lucas Chan, Violin Book 7
Quinn O'Reilly, Viola Book 7
Sarah Irons, Violin Twinkle
Michael Reeser, Violin Twinkle
Gretchen Anderson, Violin Twinkle
Stacey Rolak, Violin Book 7
Hannah Buehler, Violin Book 8

Upcoming Events

Marathon Saturday

January 27, 2007
February 10, 2007
March 10, 2007
March 31, 2007 (Piano only)
April 28, 2007 (except piano)

Solo Recitals*

January 28, 2007
February 11, 2007
March 11, 2007
April 1, 2007

Chamber Music Weekend

January 19-20, 2007

String & Voice Festival Concert

April 29, 2007, 2:00 pm, Ben Franklin Jr. High

Solo & Ensemble Concert

May 12, 2007, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

CSCO Concert

May 12, 2007, 7:00 pm, Michelsen Hall

Piano Festival Concert

May 13, 2007, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

*Solo Recitals held in Michelsen Hall unless otherwise noted

Solo Recitals are at 2:00 and 3:30 pm
Marathon Saturdays are 9:00 – 12:00 pm (Piano 11:00 – 2:00)



The next issue of the AMBASSADOR will be published February 2007

To All of You, From All of Us...
Happy Holidays!