

# 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*

March 2006



### Fry Street Quartet

In Concert  
Sunday, April 2, 2006  
NFAC Michelsen Hall, 3:00 pm

Tickets are \$5 – available at the UWSP Box Office,  
the Aber Suzuki Center Office,  
from any Suzuki Faculty member,  
or at the door.

Sponsored by:  
Sentry Insurance "Invitation to the Arts"  
American Suzuki Foundation  
Aber Suzuki Center

### From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

With funding from Sentry's Invitation to the Arts and from the Aber Suzuki Center, central Wisconsin string students will have the privilege of two days of special activities with the Fry Street Quartet prior to their Sunday, April 2nd afternoon concert. Of course I am eager to hear their concert but I am also excited about all the other things that they will do during their Residency in Stevens Point.

The Aber Suzuki faculty made the choice of who to bring to help us celebrate our first year in the Noel Fine Arts Center and our first choice was the Fry Street Quartet. We are exceptionally excited about this FSQ Residency because we have had the opportunity to get to know the quartet members as musicians, teachers and colleagues at the Intermountain Suzuki Institute during the last several summers. We love to hear them play as a quartet and we like them as people. You can't begin to imagine how much we want all of you to hear this quartet and to get to know these fun and energetic people. All four members of the Fry Street Quartet were Suzuki trained and three of the four attended the American Suzuki Institute right here in Stevens Point.

**Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>** the Fry Street Quartet will do a morning workshop with the orchestra students at P J Jacobs Junior High School and a second workshop with the orchestra students at Ben Franklin Junior High School. In the afternoon they will present a Master Class at UWSP where they will work with string chamber music groups.

**Saturday, April 1<sup>st</sup>** FSQ Special Marathon for all Suzuki string students.

9:00-10:00 Fry Street members coach violin, viola and cello group classes and also work with the

Dolce Ensemble. All Suzuki string students should participate.

10:15-11:00 Fry Street Quartet in Michelsen Hall: "What to do in a Classical Concert" This presentation includes several different listening activities and ends with a FSQ mini-concert. This program is open to all Suzuki families without charge.

11:00-Cookie break—informal interaction between Suzuki students and FSQ members

11:30-12:30 FSQ Master Class for Suzuki student chamber groups. Three ensembles have been invited to perform. Everyone is welcome to attend.

**Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>** at 3:00 p.m. in Michelsen Hall

Come to the Fry Street Quartet Concert and enjoy the musical accomplishments of these former Suzuki students. The program includes works by Haydn, McFaul and Dvorak.

Tickets for this event cost \$5.00 each and are available from your teacher, from the Suzuki office and from the UWSP Ticket office (346-4100.) Dr. Leviton's cello studio families will host a reception on the Mezzanine following the recital.



## Practicing on the Cheap: The Economics of Repetition

By Tom Yang

Economics is a study of human behavior as observed through the movement of goods and services. What makes this field interesting is that it provides an understandable metric (money) that allows principles to be formed, principles that can be used to predict how people may behave in certain situations. In many ways our children's willingness to practice comes under the governance of principles that can be described as economic. There is an economy in which the act of practicing exists. We ask our children to expend effort for the goods of skill and accomplishment. A principle of this "practice economy" is that children will be more willing to put out effort when they perceive that they are getting value in return.

Repetitions are the currency of the practice economy. It needs to be said that not all repetitions draw equally on a child's practice resources. Repetitions that are accurate and easy can be thought of as *cost effective*

or "cheap" repetitions. For example, playing a well-maintained review piece is cost effective because it is easy. In fact, review pieces can actually replenish a child's willingness to repeat things, because it represents one of the sought after goods of the practice economy – the ability to play. Repeating passages where progress can be seen is also an example of a cheap repetition. When a child senses growing power, he associates value with the effort expended. On the flip side, repetitions of new and challenging material can be thought of as being *costly*. These types of repetitions will draw down a child's enthusiasm. To be certain every new skill when started will be costly. There will always be some cost or price to be paid in learning a new skill. It is the recognition of this cost in terms of your child's enthusiasm that may help us craft a more effective practice session.

The Suzuki Method shows great sensitivity to the economic system that I have just described. When a child starts out, assignments are very small to make sure that the use of expensive repetitions is limited. The child is asked to repeat these small things so that he can play them easily and make them less expensive. One of the hallmarks of a "cheap" practice session (and in this article the word "cheap" will mean *cost effective* as opposed to "sloppy" or "slipshod") is that the ratio of playing what is easy to playing what is hard is high. If most of what we play is comfortable and easy, (practices with a lot of review built in and where the learning of new material is both well-defined and limited) the practice will be cheap, if most of what your child plays is new and unfamiliar, the practice will be dear. The key idea is that doing what is easy not only preserves wealth, it builds it by creating ease and strengthening skill and confidence. Doing what is hard, on the other hand, drains resource. One of the goals of practice session design is to make sure that old skills are defended and that exposure to new skills is limited.

Some practical applications of understanding the economics of practice.

- 1.) **Listen, listen listen!** One of the questions we need to answer to make our practices more cost-effective is "What constitutes success in practicing?" The more we give our children a clear idea of what success is, the more the child will understand when he is making progress. As pointed out earlier, repetitions where progress can be seen are cheap repetitions. In the Suzuki world,

listening to music is the most significant way in which we define what success is in practice. Listening holds the key to a student's ownership of his music making. Asking a child to learn an instrument without knowing what good playing sounds like is basically an attempt to manipulate a puppet. You can direct your student to put his fingers in the right place, play the correct rhythm, hold a bow in a certain way or sit with a certain posture, but without a clear aural picture of what he is trying to do, the output of his labor will have no meaning nor sense of value for him. In other words he will not understand why he needs to pay the currency of repetitive labor. "Why are full tones better than weak ones?" "Why are even scales better than uneven?" Listening answers these questions and is therefore a prerequisite to self-direction. A child grows musically by being surrounded by beautiful performances and over a period of time is drawn to mastering his instrument by this experience. From the standpoint of the practice economy, listening is a bargain. The parent does not have to directly engage the student; he merely plays the recording and allows the child to absorb what he will. The only instruction given is for the student to be still. There is no correcting, no debate whether the student is doing anything right or wrong, only listening to beautiful playing.

You save repetitions by listening. If you know how the piece should sound, repetitions are not being used to figure out what the composer wants (a very costly type of repetition). Students well prepared through listening, will already know what to aim for and can immediately work on learning and mastering the piece. Listen both passively and actively. Passively, by playing the core repertoire (and other recordings) in the background and actively (that is in an engaged manner) by singing along, clapping, dancing and sitting in rest position at your instrument.

- 2.) **"Ready!?"** An unnecessary phenomenon of practicing is the frequency in which students will miss the very first note of a passage to be practiced. After all, there is no time constraint to begin; you just have to make sure that you are ready. This happens even if they have just played the passage to

be repeated. The fact that students do miss first notes, betrays a flaw in our concept of repetition. We think of repeating as a *reaction* to a problem rather than an activity to be *directed* by the player. It is our goal to make the student intentional about his repetitions. For this to happen, a student needs a clear concept of what to do before playing. Taking time to prepare to play clarifies in the performer's mind what he is to do. You will make repetitions more effective by being ready before you play. Frequently, students look at practice passages as something to get through rather than something to master. A successful repetition is a thoughtful one that includes physical and mental preparation. Make sure that you have your student *practice* being ready. In his book Helping Parents Practice, Edmund Sprunger gives a wonderful example of how a mental checklist can help develop good habits of preparation (111-112). Ask students if their feet are balanced, if their posture is comfortable, if their hands are in the right places, and if they can hear in their heads how the passage goes. By training your student to get ready, you will ultimately make repetitions more meaningful.

- 3.) **Learn to stop.** When learning a piece you will come across places that are very challenging. It will be necessary to clearly define these places in order to give them special attention. You and your student need to know *exactly* when and where to stop. Do not merely approximate the beginning and end of these sections. Learn the boundaries clearly. By clearly defining the challenging areas you will make them seem more manageable. If you start and stop at the exact place that you and your teacher have defined, the repetition will be more exact and successful repetitions will be easier to reproduce. Further, you will better understand the place intellectually, because you will know where it starts and stops. It is well worth the effort to learn how to start and stop a practice section.

Related to this is avoiding what I call "tape loop practicing." This is where a student practices a short section and repeats without stopping between each repetition. When students do this, I tell them that it all counts as one repetition, because without the pause

between repetitions, there is no chance of evaluating, making adjustments, going through the process of setting up the repetition. Stopping is an important part of repetition.

- 4.) **Learn in reasonable amounts.** Consider two students. The first one struggles through Lightly Row in its entirety four times in a row then stops. The second student plays the first phrase eight times, the second phrase eight times then stops. Both have played an equal number of measures, but the second student will probably have received far more benefit. Because the repeated sections are smaller, he can more readily make adjustments from one repetition to the next. Second, because he will make adjustments more quickly, he will gain mastery of the passage faster and establish higher standards of play earlier in the process of learning the piece. Finally, because he is covering less material more deeply, what he has learned will more likely be easier the next day, that is he will have made the repetitions of these passages more cost effective for tomorrow. While it is true that he hasn't "covered" the whole piece; he will have *learned* half the piece and will have something to build on for the next day's practice.
- 5.) **Speed happens, accuracy doesn't.** There are two ways of accomplishing velocity in your playing. One is to expend more physical effort in a conscious attempt to play faster. The other is to remove the impediments of tension and insecurity by working for comfort, enjoying good tone quality and striving for ease. For a student to accomplish this he will need to develop a physically and aurally clear picture of what he needs to do. Slow, accurate, easy practice gives the student this picture by revealing the details of the passage. Easy practice removes the roadblocks of tension and insecurity. Speed naturally happens when we focus on ease and security.
- 6.) **When at last you succeed, try, try again.** – Some of the cheapest repetitions that your student will do are the ones that come *after* he's learned to play a passage correctly. Unfortunately, our mindset is usually, we finally got it right, now we can stop. We practice a short passage, figure out the notes

and the rhythm and just as we get everything in place, we stop, leaving successful repetitions that are just waiting to be taken. We use a lot of energy in learning the passage, but we stop practicing as soon as we manage a correct repetition. The repetitions following success are not only cheap repetitions, *they are the payoff* for the effort expended. Encourage your student to take "victory laps" after a success. It will save in setup repetitions the next day and ultimately make practicing the passage cheaper. To encourage your student to bask in his success, ask him questions like "Does it feel easy?" "Do you feel like you can't miss?" If this doesn't convince you to take a few extra successful repetitions, consider the mathematics of stopping upon the first experience of success. If you successfully negotiate a passage on your fifth repetition and then stop, it means that of the repetitions attempted, only 20 per cent were really successful. Not a very good percentage for a free throw shooter to have when a game is on the line.

These suggestions are made to make practice sessions more effective, not longer. If they do make them longer, you are probably covering too much unfamiliar material. Remember that in Suzuki philosophy a lesson (or a practice) should have a single point. If you limit new material to amounts that allow for thoughtful, accurate and plentiful repetitions, you may discover that you actually have more time. Time, by the way, that should be used to exercise your student's powers by playing pieces with which he is familiar, his review pieces.

Monetary wealth is accumulated little by little. There are no quick fixes – wealth is always a result of long-term disciplines. So it is with the wealth of musical skill. You need to invest your child's repetitions daily and you need to be careful how you do it. Safeguard your child's musical education by practicing the disciplines of mental and physical preparation, daily listening, daily review and *thoughtful repetitions of carefully limited new material*. Realize that with the external pressure of getting ahead in the books it is easy to overspend your child's repetition budget while getting little in return.

Citation

Sprunger, Edmund. Helping Parents Practice. St. Louis:Yes Publishing, 2005.

## Notes From the Endpin

By Lawrence Leviton

March is turning out to be an exciting month for the cello in Central Wisconsin. It started out with a bang with Yo Yo Ma's wonderful performance in Green Bay on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. It will finish with the three day residency of the Fry Street Quartet during the last weekend of March. I hope you can all make the special Marathon on April 1<sup>st</sup>, where the Fry Street Quartet and wonderful cellist Anne Francis will share their expertise and great music-making with us.

Also, with April around the corner it's time to start preparing for the festival concert which is taking place on April 30<sup>th</sup>. **The cello repertoire for this year's festival concert consists of the following:**

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

Happy reviewing!



## Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

Viola students will work with the Fry Street Quartet violist, Russell Fallstad, during the April 1 special Marathon. The focus will be on the repertoire for the April 30<sup>th</sup> Suzuki String and Voice Festival Concert.

The violas will be playing:

Joanne Martin: Cobblestone Calypso--This is a lively viola trio in 7/8.  
Pergolesi: Nina  
Handel: Bouree  
Bohemian Folk Song

Repertoire for the combined pieces will be announced later.

Because the Calypso is chamber music we will be playing with music. The remainder of the viola pieces will be played from memory.

We will work on the Calypso at the March Marathon after cookie break so please bring your music with you on March 11.



## Festival Concert – Violin Repertoire

Czardas by V. Monti

Book 6: Sonata No.3 in F Major, 2nd mvt. by G. F. Handel

Book. 4: Concerto No. 2, 3rd mvt. by F.Seitz

Book. 2: Witches Dance by N. Paganini

Book. 1: Allegretto by S. Suzuki, Lightly Row -Folk Song

Combined pieces to be announced.



## 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 February 4, **Tom Yang** was a guest clinician for the Columbia Talent Education Association in Columbus, Missouri.

On February 24, **Tom Yang** accompanied Kendall Betts and Lowell Greer in a horn recital in conjunction with the 2006 Midwest Horn Workshop.

**Ann Marie Novak and Pat D'Ercole** were members of the organizing committee for the 1st Suzuki Association of Wisconsin Weekend Workshop held Jan. 27-29 at the Inn on the Park in Madison.

**Pat D'Ercole** attended an SAA Teacher Development Committee in Austin TX, Feb. 24-26. The committee's task is to design a practicum course for teachers who take their training at institutes.

**Lawrence Leviton** was guest clinician at the Augsburg Suzuki Workshop in February.

**Lawrence Leviton** played on the Central Wisconsin Symphony concerts in February.



### February 2006 Graduates

**August Norman, Violin Twinkle**  
**Craig Felt, Violin Book 3**  
**Sawyer Eiden, Violin Twinkle**  
**Anjali Iyengar, Violin Book 1**  
**Maggie Medo, Violin Book 2**  
**Roshini Traynor, Violin Book 3**  
**Natalie Galster, Cello Book 3**  
**Brittney Van Dyke, Piano Twinkle**  
**Joseph Banovetz, Piano Book 2**  
**Maria Marchel, Violin Book 7**



### Student News

**Richard Meilhan, Rachel Ley, Maleah Zinda, Lauren Lila and Courtney Lila** attended the 1st Suzuki Association of Wisconsin Weekend Workshop held Jan. 27-29 at the Inn on the Park in Madison. The students

each received two group lessons and an enrichment class. The highlights were the concerts--one located on the 8th floor of the Inn on the Park overlooking the Capitol and the other in the Capitol Rotunda.

**Jason Smith, Rachel Reichert, Christina, Maria, and Teresita Marchel, and Emily Spaid** played for the Community Valentine's Day Dinner Sponsored by the Salvation Army Corp on February 14th, 2006. There were 120 people in attendance.

Congratulations to **Jesse Nummelin** for his wonderful playing in the Splash production of Cats.



### Upcoming Events

**Sunday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**, Piano Dedication Week Event, Michael Keller, piano and Susan Bender, soprano, 3:00 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**, Piano Dedication Week Event, Molly Roseman, piano, and the UWSP Orchestra, 7:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>**, Piano Dedication Week Event, Diane Birr, pianist, and Beth Ray, mezzo-soprano, 7:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup>**, Marathon Saturday

**Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup>**, Jill Iwanski Senior Recital, 7:30 pm, NFAC 221

**Sunday, March 12<sup>th</sup>**, Solo Recitals, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, UC Alumni Room

**Saturday, April 1<sup>st</sup>**, Activities with the Fry Street Quartet

**Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>**, Fry Street Quartet Concert, 3:00 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>**, Piano Only Marathon

**Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>**, Jane Mitchell Senior Recital, 7:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>**, Solo Recitals, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

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

**Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>**, Marathon (except Piano)

**Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>**, Christian Czernicki Senior Recital, 7:30 pm, NFAC 221

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

**Friday, May 12<sup>th</sup>**, Kayla Provisor Senior Recital, 7:00 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup>**, Solo & Ensemble Concert, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup>**, CSCO Concert, 7:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

**Sunday, May 14<sup>th</sup>**, Piano Festival Concert, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall



### **Understanding the Suzuki Method**

By Lorraine P. Fink  
(reprinted from the ASC Handbook)

The *Suzuki* movement in the United States is coming of age. In March, 1964, about 21 years ago, string teachers in the Western World heard a concert at a national music conference which demonstrated the results of the teaching philosophy of Shinichi Suzuki. The years that followed were filled with attempts to emulate those results, but unfortunately the efforts were premature on the part of most teachers due to insufficient understanding of the factors that make the method work.

Now, two decades later, the early doubts that a system, which developed in Japan, could work in America are being dispelled. With continually

improving education for teachers and parents thousands of families find their children achieving musically high standards and enjoying the process as well.

Regrettably, there are still many teachers whose knowledge of the method consists of little more than the printed material in the first Suzuki book. Yet, unlike other teaching approaches, it is the philosophy of the Suzuki method, which is to be emphasized, and it is through an understanding of the philosophy that the techniques of teaching are developed.

As one studies and gains in understanding of the Suzuki Method, its depth and significance continue to be revealed. At first, however, one becomes acquainted with some of the basic ideas of the approach, each worthy of further study:

#### **1. Rote Learning**

It seems that it is now common knowledge that the Suzuki approach is based on the "mother tongue" method of imitation and rote learning which parallels that of acquiring language skills at an early age. More and more, this concept is meeting with approval on the part of teachers as they deal with it logically. As an example, the prodigies of the past as well as many of today's artists learned their musical skills in a Suzuki-like manner because they had intense exposure to family friends, or teachers who were performing models. The idea that great talent is inherited must have originated through observation of those families where music as a consuming passion and the progeny reflected this while very young.

#### **2. Environment**

We now know that all children have talent, which can be developed. It is hoped that teachers and parents will make use of today's technology and psychology to establish an environment which will contain the positive elements that have helped develop musicians of more than a generation ago. For example, the cassette player can bring music into every home at a reasonable cost. Television can show how violinists look and move, and before long videocassettes and videodisks will be a common supplement to the weekly lesson. Active involvement of the parent daily at home as well as at the lessons is absolutely essential, particularly when the child is young.

#### **3. Listening**

Listening daily to recordings of the music studied is important. It helps accomplish several things: 1) It acquaints the student with the elements of the total

composition; 2) It serves as a model for tone, tempo, style and phrasing; 3) It enters the melody into the subconscious for ease of learning to play it, and 4) it motivates the child in that he will want to play familiar pieces.

Teachers should demonstrate abundantly for their students, because the style of Bach cannot be gleaned from the printed page. Those who resist playing a piece for a student for fear it what will make it "too easy to learn" have much more to understand about how children learn as well as how to structure a lesson.

#### **4. Use of the Music**

At first glance the Suzuki books seem woefully lacking in the material traditionally used to develop an instrumentalist. With the exception of a few concise technical examples, the books are indeed albums of pieces. The conventional teacher, accustomed to having a step-by-step procedure to follow, has reason to ask "where are the etudes, the introductions to new skills, the scales, arpeggios and drills?"

The answer is that those elements are present within the material used, but more expressly they are a part of the teacher's creative approach to each child's needs and, based on predetermined goals, his analysis of what is appropriate, and when and how to present it.

#### **5. Motivation and Repetition**

The Suzuki method is no different than other approaches in its critical need to motivate the student to repeat the material constructively many times. However, motivation is easier in the Suzuki method because assignments are custom made and woven in with the other tenets of the total philosophy. Suzuki believes that repetition results in technical security, an expanding repertoire and—above all—the child's feeling of satisfaction through achievement.

#### **6. Mastery**

Of great importance is how the student is paced through the material. Emphasis is placed on the degree of mastery the student can be encouraged to develop with a specific piece. Less importance is placed on moving rapidly through page after page of material. Students not only continue to polish a piece to a higher standard while they move into new challenges, but they are asked to maintain every piece learned and improve on them as their level of ability increases.

#### **7. Small steps**

When a traditional teacher becomes involved in the Suzuki method he learns that what he once considered a single step is really several smaller steps, each one important to understand and execute before the next is undertaken. The beginning stage seems much longer, but it leads to more rapid advancement later since less remedial work is required.

#### **8. Reading**

Fortunately the myth that Suzuki students typically are inadequate music readers is disappearing. Of course, much depends on the individual teacher and his ability to integrate the study of notation with the other elements of the method. However, it seems that much of this "non-reading" reputation is the result of comparing a Suzuki student's reading ability to his performance level—certainly not a very objective method for evaluation.

Our present generation of Suzuki students tends to read at a level comparable to traditional students in its age group. They learn to read notation, once introduced, in a comparatively short time, and the skills they already possess are likely to result in their reading with better rhythmic accuracy, intonation, tone quality, and retention than their traditionally-schooled counterparts.

#### **9. A Charge to Teachers**

Shinichi Suzuki, born in 1898, possesses a profound love of music and children. As a humanitarian and educator he has sought to bring beauty and a means of expression into the lives that he touched. It is ironic to hear him, or perhaps more accurately his method, blamed for producing non-readers, unbalanced orchestras with excessive numbers of violins, and teenagers who suffer "burn-out" from too many years in music. These are conditions that we teachers and parents have allowed to happen, and we are the ones to remedy them. Through the creative and intelligent use of Suzuki's philosophy and method, we can help our children develop both technique and musicianship to an astoundingly high level. There is little doubt that the factors at work in the Suzuki system produce a motivation that results in solid technical development and a genuine feeling of personal satisfaction with the musical outcome.

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