

# AMBASSADOR

## Aber Suzuki Center

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

December 2007

### From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

#### JANUARY PRACTICE-A-THON

The ASC faculty is pleased to announce a "win-win" way to begin the New Year. With few lessons in January it is often difficult to keep the practicing going on a regular basis but this year you have a special opportunity to help other Suzuki students while strengthening your own playing skills.

The following is taken from the SAA website at [www.suzukiassociation.org](http://www.suzukiassociation.org)

*The SAA has invited a special group of Suzuki students from across Latin America to come to Minneapolis in May 2008, to help us celebrate Dr. Suzuki's 110th birthday at the SAA 13th Conference. The students will perform Suzuki repertoire and music from their own cultures. They will also have opportunities to participate in some of the other events during the Conference and time to get to know many North American teachers and families. We hope that as many Latin American countries as possible can be represented but we need your help!*

*In order to make this exciting opportunity possible, we are asking that programs or studios consider helping sponsor one or more of the kids through a special fundraising event or other local activity. We anticipate that the group will include violin, cello, piano, guitar, recorder and flute with children ages 7-14.*

*Each contributing studio will receive information about the student(s) being supported either prior to or after the conference, along with a group photo and DVD of the L.A. Suzuki Ensemble's travel and performance.*

To participate in the January Practice-A-Thon the first thing to do is to find sponsors (e.g. parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors) who will pledge a certain amount of money for length of time practiced during the month of January. It is important for the people who make pledges to know about how many minutes you expect to practice each day so that they can pledge an amount that fits the family budget. With limitless options your sponsors can be very creative in how the pledge is

made. For example if you practice 30 minutes every day in January a pledge of a penny for every five minutes of practice yields \$1.86, a nickel for every 10 minutes means \$4.65, a penny a minute comes to \$9.30, a dollar an hour generates \$15.50, a nickel a minute would bring in \$46.50 and a quarter a minute would add a wonderful \$232.50 for the Latin American Suzuki Tour Group.

By mid-December each student will receive a packet of information including a pledge sheet and a Practice-A-Thon Practice Log from their teacher. The packet needs to be returned to the teacher by February 12. Everyone who participates in the Practice-A-Thon will be recognized during the mini-concert time at the February Marathon. The studio with the highest percent of students who participate will get a framed certificate and the three students who raise the most money for this project will each receive a special prize.



For those families who intend to give a holiday gift to their teacher but aren't sure just what to do, a donation of any size made in the teacher's name to the Latin American Tour Group Fund is a wonderful idea.



Do you have a surplus of airline miles? Another way you can help get the Latin American students to Minneapolis is to donate your airline miles. For information on how to make a mileage donation, email the Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA) at [info@suzukiassociation.org](mailto:info@suzukiassociation.org).



### Quantity, Quality, Attitudes and Change: Assessing Progress

By: Pat D'Ercole

When I first came to UWSP and taught at the Suzuki House on Main and Reserve Sts., there was a young sapling tree in front of the house that was just about 6 feet tall. I had to peer down

from my second story window to see it. But when we moved to the Fine Arts Center 22 years later, the tree had grown to about ten feet past the roof line of the 3-story house. The tree never inched up while I was watching it, but I certainly could see the noticeable change in height and girth from year to year. In the day to day, growth and advancement in music may be hardly perceptible because the steps forward can be so small, but periodically, it's good to look back over our shoulder to see how far we've come. New Year's Day is usually the time we take stock of our personal lives, but November is typically the time take stock of our academic lives. The fact that many schools have just completed parent-teacher conferences prompted some thinking about how we measure progress in music study.

To learn is to change in some manner. It may be a change in the way that we think or a change in a habit or the way we do something, or it could be a change in our attitude toward a subject or person. When we take in new information it transforms some part of us, hopefully, for the better. When it comes to measuring progress as musicians, how should we measure the changes we've made from one week to the next, or even one year to the next? What should be the standard or the criteria by which we gauge our progress?

There are basically two ways to grow in music that are similar to how we grow physically. The first is to measure our growth in *quantity*. We all remember those pencil marks on the wall marking the increase in the quantity of inches; however, one can also grow in *quality* or in conditioning. When we work out we exercise whatever muscle groups are in need so that they become stronger, more efficient and less prone to injury. Both types of growing -- quantity and quality—are important and need to be balanced as we grow.

Measuring our growth in music study is similar. One way to measure is by the *quantity* of pieces we can play; how many pieces or how many books we can play. The second way to measure growth is by the *quality* with which we play those pieces. Reviewing and polishing pieces we already know and adding to them the skills that we have acquired since learning the notes, is similar to conditioning our bodies. Our goal throughout all of our musical life is emulate what professional musicians do—playing beautifully no matter how simple or complex the piece may be. Accordingly, Book 5 musicians need to play or sing Book 2 pieces with Book 5 ability.

Since it's not what we play, but how beautifully we play that really is our ultimate goal, we might measure specific aspects of our playing. For example, we can look back to see how tone has improved. Do you have a video of your child's last recital? Compare it to his tone of today. Tone is dependent upon a balanced and efficient posture so we might look at how posture has changed. Can she play more pieces than we used to with a straight wrist? Are his shoulders relaxed more of the time than they used to be? How many times does she have to be reminded to set her feet? Bend her thumb? Keep her back straight? Are those reminders getting to be fewer and farther between?

Another factor in growing as a musician is how well the mood of the piece is communicated during a performance. How beautiful is your child's musical expression?

Do phrases crescendo to the climax and decrescendo to the end of the phrase or is the performance without inflection affect like a computer-generated voice? Do we execute the dynamics that the composer has written? Of course, attention to these finer details is in proportion to the comfort level the performer has with the piece. The more the notes, fingerings and bowings are automatic, the more surplus attention the brain has to focus on the finer polishing points.

The musical skills listed above are examples of specific goals and explicit instruction given by teachers in a lesson, but there are other types of change or learning that takes place that may be even more life-altering for our children than the progress made on the instrument. These changes affect them at a deeper level and influence their lives in the long term. They do not necessarily pertain to music study, but to the learning process in general. This deeper learning will usually result in a change of attitude which can make quantity and the quality of musical progress even easier to attain.

You may wish to reflect on the deeper learning of your child's development in these areas. (Older students may wish to ask themselves these questions.)

- Is my child's concentration growing?
- Is my child open to suggestion?
- Does my child show curiosity or initiative in problem solving, musical or otherwise?
- How does my child deal with a challenge? Does (s)he run away or persevere?
- Is my child beginning to take responsibility for listening/practice that is appropriate for his/her age?
- Is my child developing an awareness of goals and the practice tools for achieving them?
- Is my child developing time management skills appropriate to his/her age within the practice period and in terms of scheduling his/her practice?
- Does my child ever spontaneously go to play their instrument/sing just for fun?
- Is my child growing in his/her pride and identity in being a musician?

Of course, learning and changing our understanding, habits and attitudes is a life-long pursuit, a value of most adults, and one that continues to give us insights into our own person. So once we've assessed the child's progress from any of the questions above and realizing that we are the child's guide, perhaps we, as teachers and parents, should ask "What can I do *to create* an environment where:

- my child's concentration is growing?
- my child is more open to suggestion?
- my child shows curiosity or initiative in musical problem solving?
- my child learns to deal with a challenge?
- my child is beginning to take responsibility for listening/practice that is appropriate for his/her age?

- my child is developing an awareness of goals and the practice tools for achieving them?
- my child is developing time management skills appropriate to his/her age within the practice period and in terms of scheduling his/her practice?
- my child spontaneously goes to play their instrument/sing just for fun?
- my child is growing in his/her pride and identity in being a musician?

The purpose for measuring growth is to bring the current reality closer to the vision that we have for our children as persons and musicians and to help them attain the vision that they have for themselves. The process of reflecting or measuring growth is, in fact, the very process we use to determine improvement of piece we are studying. Perhaps it is the "practice" of the music practice session itself that is the rehearsal for and the process by which we become better persons. We live/play/do, we reflect, we integrate, we change. As Dr. Suzuki said, "The pursuit of art which has no terminal point is the meaning of life. Again it is a source of great joy. Let us try every day to continue our quest for the higher and the finer."

S. Suzuki, *Where Love is Deep*, p. 47.



### **Voila Viola**

By Dee Martz

Winter is definitely here and our violas really know it. As the wood dries out and changes the optimum viola sound becomes more and more difficult to produce. If you want to make sure that your viola continues to sound its best during the Wisconsin winter then it is very important to be aware of the humidity in the air. When the furnace runs at home the air can become as dry as the air in the Sahara Desert. In the Noel Fine Arts Center we are very fortunate to have a power humidifier that runs at this time of year. In the Martz house we purchased a new furnace two years ago and made sure to add a power humidifier to the furnace itself. Even so I keep a humidifier stick in my viola case and add water to it every day.

If you own those little green snakes (aka Dampits) it is time to use them but putting them in the f holes will only work if you remember to add water daily. If you prefer to use a system that does not go directly into your instrument there are several designed to fit in your viola case such as the Stretto and the D'Addario Instrument Humidifier. If you wish to purchase a humidifying system it is very easy to find them at string shops locally and on line.



### **Parent Education Sessions**

By Ann Marie Novak

Please join the December session "The Art of Reviewing with a Purpose" on December 11 at 7:30 pm, NFAC 144.

Future sessions are as follows:

February 12 - "Suzuki: Translating the Philosophy Into Reality"  
 March 11 - "Do You Hear What I Hear?" (Listening)  
 April 8 - "Fostering Independent Learning"  
 May 13 - "In the Good Old Summertime: Survival of Those Lazy Days of Summer"

We look forward to seeing you there!!!



### **Maria Marchel Presents Senior Recital on Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>**

Maria Marchel, violinist, will present a senior recital on Sunday, January 27, at 2:00 in Michelsen Hall. She will play two movements of the *Sonata in D* by Handel, the 1<sup>st</sup> movement of the Mozart *Concerto in D*, and three shorter works-- *Polish Dance* by Severn, *Vocalise* by Rachmaninoff and *Hoedown* by Copeland. Maria's sisters, Teresita and Christina, will assist her on *Hopak*, written by ASI faculty member, Joanne Martin. David Becker will be the collaborative pianist. All are invited to attend and a reception will follow.

Maria is a student of Pat D'Ercole and began her studies at the age of four. She is a member of the CSCO, SPASH Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra and has played in many musicals both at SPASH and for community theatre productions. She has participated in Solo and Ensemble both at the district and state levels. She also has won first place for fiddling at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Days in Pepin, WI. Recently, she was awarded by the Junction City Golden Stars 4-H Club where she received the Leadership Award, the highest honor a member can receive.

Maria plans to attend UWSP next year.



### **Violinist Kelley Rolak Presents Senior Recital in Marshfield**

Violinist Kelley Rolak will present her senior recital on Saturday, Feb. 2, at 2:00 at the Christ Lutheran Church, 1208 W 14<sup>th</sup> St., Marshfield. Kelley's performance will begin with two movements of the Handel Sonata in A. Also on the program is the first movement of Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole*, the *Graceful Ghost* by Bolcolm, *Salut d'amor* by Elgar, and the *Preludium and Allegro* by Kreisler. Kelley will also be assisted

by her sister, Stacey in a premier performance of the *Suite for the Sweets*, a three movement work for two violins, cello and piano commissioned by her father and written by Catherine McMichael. Tom Yang will be the collaborative pianist.

Kelley began her violin studies in Texas before her family moved to Marshfield. She studied 4 years with Margery Aber and since then with Pat D'Ercole. Kelley is the concertmaster of both the CSCO and the Marshfield High School Orchestra. She has also been a member of the All-State Honors Orchestra and has participated in Solo and Ensemble both at district and state. Last year, her solo performance was recognized on the WSMA Wall of Fame. Kelley also plays the French horn in the Marshfield H.S. Wind Ensemble and in musicals.

Kelley plans to attend college next year and major in physics. Her goal is to become a medical doctor.



#### Student News

On November 4, pianist, **Hannah Locher** performed her home "Minuet Recital."

On November 25, pianist, **Sarah Thimmesch** performed her Book 1 home recital.

Waupaca High School staged "Fiddler on the Roof" in November. **Tyler Bauer** and **Emma Sands** played in the pit, and **Gretchen Sands** was the Fiddler.



#### Faculty News

On November 13, **Tom Yang** presented a talk on the Suzuki philosophy for the Madison Area Piano Teacher's Association in Madison, Wisconsin.

On November 5 the Copernicus Quartet (violinist Steve Bjella, violist **Dee Martz**, cellist Lawrence Leviton, and double bassist Dave Story) presented a concert for the students at Saint Bronislava Elementary School in Plover, WI. In addition to performing music by Bach, Bartok, Steiner and Hoffmeister the Copernicus Quartet members told the students about the connection between a former Saint Brons parish member, Edmund Bukholt, and the wonderful old instruments that were used in this performance.



#### November Graduates

Erin Tschida, Piano Twinkles  
Charlie Frerks, Piano Twinkles  
Zachary Langemeier, Piano Book 1  
Rebekah Glazer, Piano Book 1  
Joanna Kamps, Piano Book 2  
Wade Dittburner, Violin Book 6  
Ben Karbowski, Violin Book 7  
Michael Crump, Violin Book 7  
Cal Irons, Violin Book 3  
Maggie Medo, Violin Book 4  
Jonathan Cochrane, Violin Book 5



#### Upcoming Events

December 8, 2007  
Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

December 9, 2007  
Solo Recitals, 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

January 18-19, 2008  
Chamber Music Weekend, Concert December 19<sup>th</sup>  
3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

January 26, 2008  
Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

January 26, 2008  
Solo Recitals – 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall



# Happy

# Holidays!!