

AMBASSADOR

Aber Suzuki Center

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

February 2007

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

This article was written specifically for string players but most of it easily applies to every musician. The ideas are not mine but have been gathered from years of listening to my teachers, colleagues and students.

Practice Platitudes Need Practice Solutions

Practice Platitudes

Practice makes perfect.

Beware! You learn what you practice.

Perfect practice makes perfect.

Practice only on the days you eat.

Practice every day.

Practice at the same time every day.

You've heard them all, but none really tell you what to do when you run into problems.

When you have a new piece to learn and you have no idea how it sounds what you really need are: **Practice Solutions.**

How do I begin?

Take advantage of the information that the composer has given you. Time signature, key signature, style markings, all printed instructions including tempo markings, dynamics, accents, slurs, etc. Take advantage of any information you have about the composer, style period, etc.

****Remember that tone always counts. Make sure that your tone is focused and resonant even the first time through slowly. Good tone gives you courage as you work your way through the challenges of a new piece.****

I am making some progress on the new piece but I just don't get the rhythm in a few places. What strategies can I use to figure it out on my own?

Use math skills to figure out note values. What kind of note gets one beat? Two beats? Half a beat....Count out loud. Keep track of the pulse. Mark the beats and divisions.

Subdivide, slow down, use a metronome and work in very small units.

****Remember: subdivide, subdivide, subdivide!****

One part sounds really weird. How can I be sure that I am playing what is written?

Play one note, stop and figure out where the other note can be found on the fingerboard. When doing this don't worry about the bowings or the rhythm. You need to find the pitches first. Simplify the fingering (play it in first position) until you know what it sounds like. Play down one or two octaves. Double-check the accidentals. Are you carrying them through the measure? When all else fails you can use a piano to help train your ear. Muddy intonation can make even very ordinary passages sound weird, but remember sometimes things are supposed to sound weird.

****Remember that intonation needs constant attention. Let your instrument help. Maintain a high level of suspicion. Don't expect to wake up every day able to find the pitches you have already sorted out. Warm up your ears. Do a substantial amount of practice without vibrato, especially in the early stages of learning new material. Even Yo Yo Ma talks freely about the never ending challenge of playing in tune. ****

The bowings are really awkward. How can I learn them?

Slow down. Learn slurred notes separately then add slurs. Make sure that you have a plan for what part of the bow you should be in and how you are going to get there or stay there. Learn awkward string crossings slowly and with small bows. Use a variety of rhythms for better coordination.

****Remember: you learn what you practice so carefully include the correct bowing while you are learning the notes. ****

I can go lento, but the part says presto.

You must go so slowly that you can practice without error. Make sure that everything is under control and easy before you speed it up. Make sure that you have played it at least three times in a row 100% accurately before you speed it up. If you have a place you "mess up" stop just before you get there, gather your brain and go on correctly. Use a metronome to speed up very gradually. If you try it faster and errors creep in

then slow down. Every time you play with a mistake it will take you longer to unlearn and relearn the spot. Use a variety of rhythms to develop flexibility and coordination. Use upside down bowings. (Play the bowings backwards.) With especially awkward string crossings, play the passage on open strings.

****Remember: "the slower I go, the faster I go" really works. ****

I can play through the piece but it's boring---Or---How can I make sure what I'm playing sounds like music and not just notes?

Make sure that you are playing everything that is on the page. Exaggerate. Every note must be either going to some place or coming from some place. Record yourself to become aware of how it really sounds. Sing the phrase (Yes, you can!). Remember that even though string players don't need to breathe to play, the music needs to breathe to make sense.

****Remember: Musicians who play in Technicolor speak to the heart and soul of the listeners.****

Its sounds great at home but then.....

Perform for yourself, your pets, your parents and your grandparents. Make a CD of your "performance" practice. Perform for your friends and let them perform for you. Volunteer to perform at school, at church and anywhere else that might enjoy live music.

****Remember: performing takes practice so practice performing.****



Preparing & Rehearsing for a Recital: An Accompanist's Perspective

By Ann Marie Novak

So, it's that time again...time for an Aber Suzuki Center recital...and this month, it's *your* turn to perform. What will be happening in those last couple of weeks? What should you be focusing on? What can you expect in the rehearsal?

Below are a few important points about recital rehearsals and preparation for both:

Preparing for the rehearsal

It is, of course, very important that you practice regularly during the last two weeks or so before your recital. *How* you practice is already well outlined by your teacher, so I will not go deeply into that subject.

Preparing for the rehearsal is pretty much the same as practicing for the performance itself. But here are a few tips that might help you just before the rehearsal:

- Listen a lot to your recording and pay some attention to the accompaniment. You want the piano part to feel connected to your solo part. The last thing you want to have happen is for the piano part to distract you in the rehearsal or in the performance!
- Try to keep a realistic and most of all, a steady tempo. This is as important for the pianist as it is for you. Remember, you are in control. It's a lot like driving a car...you come equipped with both an accelerator *and* a set of brakes.
- Be able to start at various significant spots in your piece. Your teacher will no doubt work with you on this; but know that it is important for the rehearsal as well, especially if you have a rather long piece. Often times, a pianist will ask you to start at some place in the piece just so that he/she can better understand what you need or want.
- Ask your teacher about playing the "Distraction Game". Have someone in the family try to distract you by talking or by walking around while you play. This can be a fun game if you are prepared, but it could be a little stressful if you are not...so, like I said above, ask your teacher.
- Eat well, sleep well. Performing is just like an athletic event. It requires that both your brain and your body are in the finest working condition possible. You will no doubt have a better outcome if you are well rested and have eaten a light meal before the performance/recital.
- Declare a run-through! This means that you make a decision to go straight through a piece without stopping. This is very important in that last week before a rehearsal. Sometimes we want to stop and fix things that are not quite to our liking. That is a valid form of practice too, but the idea is that when you declare a run-through, stick with your idea and keep going no matter what!

The Rehearsal Day

This is the day that we pianists look forward to every month! This is the day that we get to see you (or meet you for the first time), spend a little time with you, and make music with you. Here are a few things that might help you know what to expect:

- The walk-through. Most of us ask you to walk up and take your bow and get set just like it will be the next day in the concert. Once again, we do this not only for you, but also for us. We want to make this day as much like the performance as possible!
- The run-through. This is one of the main functions of the rehearsal...to run through the piece together. Since every one of you is a unique individual, you all play your pieces slightly differently from each other. This gives us a chance to adjust to you and it gives you a chance to get comfortable with us.
- Spot-checking. Sometimes the pianist will ask you to re-run a certain spot. Try not to get worried about this...this is a normal part of a rehearsal. It doesn't

necessarily mean the you have done something wrong...it may be that one of us made a mistake (we do too, you know!) or that we just want to hear you again so that we understand your phrasing or timing.

- What if something goes wrong? First of all, try not to panic, as this will make it harder to play well. Second of all, remember that good performances are made up of two main components: preparation and concentration. Both are needed for a fine performance. Chances are that you are well-prepared, so try to think of it as a hiccup in concentration. Athletes all know this secret. Why is it that Michael Jordan didn't make every single free-throw he attempted? Why is it that Brett Favre sometimes throws interceptions? Answer: there are many factors that affect the outcome of a person's attempts. Probably the most important is concentration. Another factor to remember is that we are humans, and by nature, humans are not perfect.

Parents

- The obvious: helping your child to practice or acting as an audience are the usual ways of being involved in this preparation scenario.
- Help your child to be calm: set a little earlier bedtime around performances, and help them to eat right before the big day. Also, try to not create nervousness by asking them if they are nervous or by telling them how nervous you would be. It's amazing how well the power of suggestion works!!!
- Allow the pianist to run the rehearsal...they may not know your child as well as you do, but they are very experienced at what they do. They too want your child to do well and to feel comfortable.
- Most of all, just be there for your child. You already do it so well, just keep it coming!

The Big Day!

It's performance day! You have done all of your homework by now. Sit back and relax, knowing you are fully prepared. Invite family members and friends. Your main job at this point is to concentrate and to have fun!!!



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

Violist **Henri Casadesus** (1879-1947) was a music publisher who in 1901 founded the Society of Ancient Instruments with Camille Saint-Saens. The society was a group of five performers who used period instruments such as the viola da gamba or the viola d'amore which was Henri's preferred instrument. The society was a group of five performers who were known for playing what they called obsolete instruments

and for premiering rediscovered works by long-dead composers. Research now confirms that many of the works, including the Handel and J. C. Bach Concertos that are in the Suzuki viola books, were not written by the named composers but actually by Henri and his brothers Marius and Robert. We owe a big thank you to Henri for writing our concertos. They are wonderful teaching pieces and great fun to play.



Toyko String Quartet Performs in Stevens Point



(Photo by: Peter Checchia)

The Tokyo String Quartet has captivated audiences and critics alike since it was founded more than 30 years ago. Regarded as one of the supreme chamber ensembles of the world, the quartet is comprised of violist Kazuhide Isomura, a founding member of the group; second violinist Kikuei Ikeda, who joined the ensemble in 1974; cellist Clive Greensmith, the former Principal Cellist of London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, who joined in 1999; and first violinist **Martin Beaver***, who joined the ensemble in 2002. "This was quartet playing of the highest order, truly fabulous playing."

This world class string quartet is performing in Stevens Point on April 22. The concert is at 7:30 at Sentry Theater. Tickets are available at the UWSP Box Office 715-346-4100.

* For **Martin Beaver** this is a return to Stevens Point as he performed at Sentry Theater and taught at the American Suzuki Institute several times in the 1990s.

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.

Adam Qutaishat to Present Senior Recital

Adam Qutaishat will present his Senior Recital on Sunday, February 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Chestnut Avenue Center for the Arts located at 208 S. Chestnut Avenue in Marshfield. The recital will include works for viola by Marcello, Bohm, Veracini, Pleyel and Marais. Adam will also sing several songs including works by Schumann and Bach. He will be assisted by Kelley Rolak on viola and David Becker on piano. A reception will follow the concert.



Matthew Leifheit to Present Senior Recital

You are invited to a senior recital by Matthew Leifheit on February 25, 2007 at 2:00 at the First Presbyterian Church in Marshfield, Wisconsin. He will be accompanied by Ann Marie Novak. He has been a Suzuki voice student of Mary Hofer's for the past twelve years, and is now a senior at Marshfield High School. Matt is an excellent student who has many diverse interests. He has been involved with the Marshfield High School Drama Club, and has appeared in 6 of its productions. He has also participated in his high school's madrigal singers for the past two years. After graduating high school, Matt plans to attend art school in pursuit of an education in photography.



Parent Education

The following Parent Education classes have been scheduled during the Spring semester:

February 13th – "First, you gotta create...da mood": Home Environment for Practicing

March 6th – "Practicing: The Great Quest for Consistency Without Boredom"

April 17th – "Fostering Independent Learning"

Classes will be held at 7:30 pm in NFAC 361. All parents are welcome!



ASC Waiting Room

We were very disappointed to discover damage to the bulletin board in the ASC Waiting Room.

Please be sure to monitor your children when using the waiting room.



January 2007 Graduates

Annelise Odders, Piano Book 1
John Peck, Violin Book 1
Craig Felt, Violin Book 4
Gretchen Sands, Violin Book 8
Keisuke Yamamoto, Violin Book 9



Upcoming Events

Marathon Saturday

February 10, 2007

March 10, 2007

March 31, 2007 (Piano only)

April 28, 2007 (except piano)

Solo Recitals*

February 11, 2007

March 11, 2007

April 1, 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)