

AMBASSADOR

Aber Suzuki Center

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

April 2008

From the Director's Desk

By Dee Martz

Pianists and string players learn a lot of Minuets as they work through the early Suzuki Books. Those that we call Minuet 1, Minuet 2, Minuet 3 and just plain Minuet (in Book 4 piano), all have J. S. Bach listed as the composer. This is easy to remember and quite credible since J. S. Bach was quite a prolific composer and he lived at the time of the Minuet. Unfortunately, though credible it turns out the listing Bach as the composer of all of these Minuets is just not accurate.

Last year I picked up a program and noticed that one young student was playing a Minuet by Christian Petzold. My curiosity increased as we got closer to that portion of the program. I have never heard of Petzold so I had no idea what to expect. Imagine my surprise when I heard the student play my favorite of the Bach Minuets, number 3. After the recital I asked Tom Yang, the student's teacher, whether we had made a mistake on the program or if the student has just gotten up on the stage and played a different piece from the one the teacher expected to hear. I should be used to learning things from Mr. Yang but frankly I found his answer a bit shocking. Thanks to recent scholarly sleuthing, we now know that even though Bach has been given credit for this Minuet for centuries Christian Petzold is the actual composer.

I was just beginning to get used to this idea and then I picked up the program for one of the March recitals that included Minuet 2 by Anonymous. I suspected that this might be "my" Bach Minuet 2 but I had no clue why it was listed as composed by Anonymous. Once again I went to my source (TY) and found out that even with lots of scholarly sleuthing it is very unclear just who wrote this Minuet. It could be Petzold or Bach or ???.

Bach got credit for these Minuets because an assumption was made that the music found in the manuscript notebooks given by J. S. to his second wife, Anna Magdalena, were all written by Bach, unless a different composer was noted in the book itself. It turns out that all the pieces in the 1722

notebook were written by J. S. himself, regardless in whose hand the parts were written. Thanks to some scholarly some recent scholarly research we now know that this is not the case with the 1725 manuscript. This book, commonly referred to as the "Anna Magdalena Bach Notebook," contains works by J. S. Bach and a number of other composers, some of whom are identified in the book, some identified much later and frankly the composers of some of the works are still a mystery and therefore listed as anonymous. With this information it should be of no surprise to learn that both the Minuets that we refer to as 2 and 3 appear in the 1725 notebook.

Just in case you wonder--Minuet 1 and the Minuet in Suzuki piano book 4 really are by J. S. Bach so at least there should be no more surprises with the "Bach" Minuets.



How's Practicing Going?

By Tim Mutschlecner

For starters, let's acknowledge how utterly dependent we are as teachers to you, the parents. Through your commitment, encouragement, and sometimes bribery, you make practice happen at home. Without the follow-through that parents are in charge of, even the most productive lesson would be ineffective for lack of reinforcement at home. Dr. Suzuki saw the practice-parent as an equal partner in the Teacher-Parent-Child triangle. Thanks for all your efforts, patience, and perseverance.

Let's begin by defining what practice is. Though every student occasionally needs to just play through repertoire, practice is more than this. Practice is the systematic repetition of correct playing movements until a musical goal is consistently demonstrated. This applies to learning the first phrase of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star or mastering the

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto. What is it about repetition that is so important? The great violin teacher, Dorothy Delay put it this way: "Repetition makes the brain speed up." Repeating passages actually transfers memory to a different part of the brain as well as turning consciously directed movements into automatic reflex-like behavior.

Have you noticed that even while using muscles and lots of energy, really fine players look relaxed? This is because effective practice makes music easier rather than harder to play. When teachers show how to break down complicated passages into small manageable parts they do this in part to keep the student's body relaxed and comfortable. Cellist Janos Starker stated that he looked back at his whole career as a process of learning to play with lower and lower levels of body tension.

Delay also observed, "If something feels too fast, remember that the bow will always do it, but if the left hand doesn't want to, just go slower. If you go slowly enough you can play absolutely anything." Other reasons teachers recommend slow practice is that it allows a student (and parent) to be able to hear and fix intonation difficulties. Slow playing provides increased time to consciously direct bow and left hand movement. Repetition will gradually turn these motions into "automatic pilot." Perhaps most importantly, beautiful tone is developed through slow playing.

Many teachers encourage the use of a metronome to gradually build up to concert speed. Most young players don't spend enough time practicing slowly before they try playing up to speed, and then are frustrated when difficult passages elude them. The most important fable for musicians is "The Tortoise and the Hare!"

It must be added that always practicing a piece under tempo is not a good move either. The muscles and nerve impulses used for slow playing are different from those used when playing "full throttle." One way to limit the disconnect is to try and use the same part of the bow and length of bow when practicing slowly that you will use when playing up to speed. This is why we learn Perpetual Motion initially with staccato bowing, allowing us to play with short, stopped strokes in the same part of the bow we will use when playing it up to speed with a détaché bowing.

Playing up to speed is also a way to verify the efficacy of one's practice: if things haven't improved perhaps it's time to try a different approach. As any musician will tell you playing fast *feels* different than playing slowly. Initiating impulses may cover many measures instead of note by note. While gradually increasing the tempo more and more motions are transferred from conscious control to reflex action.

Along with working on a new piece, practice may include the piece being polished, review, tonalization, etudes, exercises, and note reading. Not all these facets of practice are

appropriate for every child at every level. Review, because it is so important, will be touched on briefly. Pat D'Ercole observes that review for the beginning student is where skills become automatic because there is a surplus attention that can be used for teaching points. This is why Dr. Suzuki claimed students raise their ability with a piece they can already play. Having the notes, rhythms, and bowing under your belt frees up your attention for other things. One psychological reason why review is important is that if a student is always only practicing the next new piece, gradually the impression will be made that playing music is nothing but hard work. Learning a new piece is an uncomfortable process even for those of us who have been playing all our lives. Returning to pieces already learned can instill a sense of confidence and self-assuredness. Remember: it is called *playing* music, not *working* music!

An important aspect of practice for students at every level is listening to recordings and attending concerts. For Book 1 students daily listening to the CD results in memorizing the pitches and rhythms, as well as imitating the tone and style of the recording artist. As Dr. Suzuki observed, this is the same process used in learning the language and dialect of one's parents. David Becker recommends that intermediate and advanced students listen to recordings of polished, working, and upcoming repertoire. For advanced students, active listening means having a critical ear to what one likes or dislikes about a recording as well as trying to determine what the performer does to convey feeling through the music.

Practice, of course is not just about building technique, but also about discovering how to play expressively through your instrument. One of the most amazing things to see is how the personality of each musician comes across in their playing! Sometimes it is helpful to think of a musician as an actor who happens to be playing an instrument. Practicing includes thinking about the drama and emotions in the piece you are playing. This includes both noting how the piece makes you feel and exploring the means used to express this to an audience. When you practice, practice using your imagination.

B. Sand, *Teaching Genius: Dorothy DeLay and the Making of a Musician*, p. 84

S. Suzuki, *Where Love is Deep*, excerpt from *First Class Tips for Suzuki Parents*, p. 38



Voila Viola

By Dee Martz

Preview and Review

Preview occurs when a teacher assigns small bits of a new piece before the student actually begins working on the piece itself. These small bits are selected because they contain the new techniques and the most challenging areas. Focusing on the preview spots allows the student to master these first and as a bonus gives plenty of time to strengthen the new techniques while the remainder of the piece is being learned.

Review occurs at the other end of the learning cycle. In review, which is a hallmark of the Suzuki approach, students maintain a repertoire by continuing to play pieces previously learned. The familiarity that comes with repetition leads to a sense of security and confidence. In addition, when reviewing pieces the student is able to concentrate on refining technical skills and developing more profound musicianship.

Are you including preview and review in every practice session?



Parent Education Sessions

Please join the April session "Fostering Independent Learning" on **Tuesday, April 8, at 7:30 pm, NFAC 144.**

Future sessions are as follows:

May 13 - "In the Good Old Summertime: Survival of Those Lazy Days of Summer"

We look forward to seeing you there!!!



Festival Concert Review Pieces

The 2008 Aber Suzuki Center Festival Concert will be held at 2:00 p.m. on April 27 at Ben Franklin Junior High School. The reception following the concert will give everyone involved the opportunity to marvel at the musical accomplishments and to honor the graduating seniors.

Please use the following list to focus your preparation for this recital. Individual preparation really does determine the overall quality of the group performances. This is a wonderful opportunity to follow Dr. Suzuki's advice "Raise your ability on a piece that you can play."

Plan to bring your family and friends to this fabulous musical celebration.

Violin

Eccles Sonata, Grave (Book 8)
Vivaldi Concerto in A, Allegro (Book 4)
Gavotte in g minor (Book 3)
Waltz (Book 2)
Happy Farmer (Book 1)
Andantino (Book 1)
Go Tell Aunt Rhody (Book 1)

Viola

Telemann: Concerto for 2 violas 4th movement 1'40"
Minuet #3 Book 3 J. S. Bach 2'45"
Two Grenadiers Robert Schumann 1'38"
Tango to Trinidad Joanne Martin 43"

Cello

Twinkle Variation A (Book 1)
Song of the Wind (Book 1)
Hunter's Chorus (Book 2)
Scherzo (Book 3)
Danse Rustique (Book 5)



Sam Schenkman Presents Senior Violin Recital

Sam Schenkman will play his senior violin recital on Saturday, April 5 at 7:00 p.m. The recital will take place at the First Presbyterian Church located at 200 S. Lincoln Avenue in Marshfield. The program includes the Allemande from Partita No. 2 and the first movement of the Concerto No. 2 both by J. S. Bach. Sam will also play the entire Concerto No. 3 in G major by W. A. Mozart, Spanish Dance by Granados and the Polish Dance by Severn. Sam and his brother, Teddy, will perform a movement from a Beethoven duet for violin and viola. Sam's sister, Lucy Schenkman, and brother-in-law, Andrew DeSimone, will join Sam and Teddy to perform the Telemann Concerto in D major for four violins. Dave Becker will provide piano accompaniment.



Student News

On March 3, Katla Anderson, Aubrey Borchardt, Sienna Borchardt, Kobe Carlson, Trevor Carlson, Jake Dudas, Nathan Hunter, Ted Irons, Mac Lucas, Victoria Tillotson, Erin Tschida and Olivia Yang participated in a Monodrama entitled "Tupman the Turtle," with Jenni Yang, narrating. The pieces came from the Volume 1 of the Suzuki Piano and Cello books. A monodrama is a narrated piece with music highlighting the text. The performance took place at the Portage County Public Library on Main Street, Stevens Point.



Aber Suzuki Students Perform at Lincoln Senior Center



Antony, Natalie and Frederick Van Tiem performed during the March 11th open house for the Holly Shoppe located in the Lincoln Senior Center. The three young musicians each played solos and also played some nice ensemble versions of standard Suzuki repertoire. A very appreciative audience of between 40 and 50 people enjoyed the hour-long presentation. The students were accompanied by Dave Becker.



Faculty News

Pat D'Ercole was a clinician at the North Shore Suzuki Strings Violin Workshop on March 8 in Milwaukee.

Kyoko Fuller was a clinician for the Levine School of Music Suzuki String workshop and Concert in Washington DC, March 8-9.



Upcoming Events

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Parent Education Session, "Fostering Independent Learning", 7:30 pm, NFAC 144

Saturday, April 12, 2008

Piano Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, April 13, 2008

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

Saturday, April 26, 2008

Marathon (except Piano), 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, April 27, 2008

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

Saturday, May 10, 2008

Solo & Ensemble Concert – 2:00 and 3:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

Saturday, May 10, 2008

CSCO Concert, 7:30 pm, Michelsen Hall

Sunday, May 11, 2008

Piano Festival Concert, 2:00 and 3:30 pm,
Michelsen Hall

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Parent Education Session, "In The Good Old Summertime: Survival of Those Lazy Days of Summer", 7:30 pm, NFAC 144

