



AMBASSADOR

Aber Suzuki Center

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

December 2009

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Parent Education Session
“Suzuki, Translating the
Philosophy into Reality”
7:30 pm, NFAC 144

Saturday, December 12, 2009

Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, December 13, 2009

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

Saturday, January 30, 2010

Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Saturday, January 30, 2010

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

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

Parent Education Session
“Practicing, the Great Quest for
Consistency without Boredom”
7:30 pm, NFAC 144

Saturday, February 20, 2010

Marathon, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, February 21, 2010

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

From the Director's Desk

By Pat D'Ercole, Interim Director

While traveling over the Thanksgiving weekend, I was listening to an audio book, *Your Brain on Music* by Daniel Levitin. I was particularly fascinated by the research on the topic of genetics vs. environment. Dr. Suzuki was the first to make the claim that it was the environment that made the difference, but his determination was based on his observation of children. What were neuroscientists and geneticists saying 70 years later based on scientific data?

Research is showing that it's a 50-50 proposition. People can have the genetic makeup that predisposes them to have an easier time learning music i.e. eye-hand coordination, muscle control, a sense of timing, or memory for patterns, but unless those tendencies are nurtured and practiced they will not necessarily add up to a musician. Dr. Suzuki's analogy of the seed planted in the ground is still applicable. The seed has all the genetic makeup to be a rose or a carrot, but unless it's watered, given sunshine, fertilized and tilled, it will not develop into a rose or carrot.

There are also personality factors that contribute to making a musician. Traits such as determination, perseverance, self-confidence and patience are perhaps the most important factors in being a successful musician. These are the gifts that we wish to give our children and these are mostly environmental and over which we **do** have influence. Children learn and develop these traits by what they observe us do when we struggle, or from our counseling and encouragement when they feel they have failed. If they can develop these traits then they can succeed in music or any endeavor they put their mind to. Consider this list of experts¹ who appeared to be failures on their way to the top:

¹ Thanks to Charles Young for making this list available to me.

- Thomas Edison tried more than 2,000 experiments before he was able to get his light bulb to work.
- Albert Einstein didn't start speaking until he was 9 years old.
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg received no job offers when she graduated from law school. She now serves on the US Supreme Court.
- Michael Jordan didn't make his high school basketball team. He was later named the greatest athlete of the 20th Century by ESPN.
- Wilma Rudolph was born prematurely. At age 4, her survival was in doubt because of scarlet fever and double pneumonia. She was left with a paralyzed leg and told she would never walk again. She later won 3 gold medals in Olympic Track and Field competitions.
- Dr. Seuss's first book was rejected by 27 publishers and Seuss considered burning the manuscript. The eventual publisher sold six million copies.
- Lucille Ball was told that she had no talent and should go home from Murray Anderson's drama school. Failing to get into any Broadway chorus lines, she worked as a waitress and soda jerk.
- The Beatles were rejected in 1962 by the Decca, Pey, Philips, Columbia and HMV labels.
- J. S. Bach was the fourth choice for the job of Kapellmeister at Thomaskirche in Leipzig, Germany.
- Luciano Pavarotti could not read music. He went on to become one of the leading Tenors in the world and still had trouble reading music!

To be counted among a list of such notable persons should give us all motivation to persevere. Inside this issue of the Ambassador you'll find additional encouragement in *The Perfect Schedule?* by Mary Hofer and further suggestions in *...And the Survey Says*. For further inspiration attend the Parent Education Session, ***Suzuki, Translating the Philosophy into Reality* on Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 7:30 NFAC 144** and check the articles in your *ASC Parent Handbook*.



ASC Severe Weather Policy

During times of severe winter weather, the local media will be notified if UWSP is closing to the public. 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 to the public 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 local media 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.

Dave Becker	346-4902
Pat D'Ercole	346-4938
Kyoko Fuller	346-4951
Mary Hofer	346-4921
Tim Mutschlecner	346-3580
Ann Marie Novak	346-4889
Tom Yang	346-4977



The Perfect Schedule?

By Mary Hofer

The perfect Suzuki practice schedule...is the one that works well for you. Recently, I was talking with a fellow Suzuki parent of three children. When I told her I was trying to find a subject for my Suzuki newsletter, she posed the question many of us wonder: "I would like to know how other families get it all done, when they fit in the practice and what do they do in practice?" It was thought provoking. Is there a perfect practice schedule or best way to practice? I mentioned this subject to Ms. D'Ercole, and she referred me to a book titled, *A Suzuki Parents Diary*, by Carroll Morris.

Well, I read the book, and I sent out e-mails to several parents in the program and asked them to send me a daily schedule and some practice ideas. What did I find out? I was surprised to discover the variety in practice schedules, the variety in family activities, homework, parents' work schedules and family obligations. But there were some common factors and good advice in all the letters that I think might be inspirational and helpful to all of us.

The number one factor in successful practicing and scheduling is the high level of commitment to the importance of music in their children's lives. Families are willing to drive great distances to lessons or make many round trips during the week and spend several hours in lessons and in practice each week. Music has been incorporated in their daily routine similar to the routines of everyday life like brushing their teeth or having lunch. The parents know the importance of a good musical education in the formation of their children's lives.

Another factor mentioned was listening. One parent said, "I controlled the music and when we were on our daily road trips, their Suzuki music was in the car and always being played." Technology can be very helpful. There are shower CD players, car CD players; you can listen to a CD almost anywhere! I-Pods and MP3 players are also handy-as long as you know what your child is listening to. I tell my students there should be no other listening until you have listened to your Suzuki repertoire many times. Make several copies of their music and have them conveniently placed so you can pop them into the player without looking for them.

I received some wonderful and helpful practice techniques. For example, stop on the high rather than insist on one more time for a practice piece. One parent told me that her daughter always liked the eggs she had prepared for her breakfast until the time she made her daughter finish the last bit left on her plate. Now, she doesn't like to eat eggs anymore.

Be your child's cheerleader. At sports events, there's always a crowd to cheer on the athlete. Why not do this during music practice? Of course, practice doesn't have to be all fun and praise, but remember to find at least one thing your child did well during his or her practice session. There are myriad things to praise; for example, they played without complaining, they did a nice bow, posture was good, feet position was good, etc.

On page 52 of Suzuki Parents Diary, the child teaches the father how to hold the violin. The child gets the thrilling opportunity to teach the parent. Children become so accustomed to adults doing everything better than what they can, so when they can teach the parent, they feel good about themselves and their accomplishment and they have learned their own technique more thoroughly.

With the upcoming Holiday season, try to help your child learn one Christmas song that he or she can play well for relatives. This is such a wonderful motivator for practice. Another important motivator for practice is attending concerts. The child will be inspired to become a better musician and will undoubtedly aspire to fulfill musical ambitions and dreams of success in their music.

One of the parents described how her three-year-old daughter heard a violin concert in Green Bay and afterwards wanted to play violin. Another parent wrote, "After attending lessons and practicing this week, we attended the Symphony Concert and my ten-year-old fell asleep." But I happen to know he is, at present, playing in two youth orchestras. When you have a Holiday party, have everyone play a solo piece, and then everyone plays together. This can be followed by play time and time for parents to visit with each other.

Don't be afraid to personalize your work (p. 27). For Instance, one day, Twinkle theme C can be grasshoppers, another day can be grandfather. We all like variety and making a simple variation can make learning more fun for the child. I personally like the popcorn and donuts idea for variation B! One of my son's jobs is to load the dishwasher. When he is a little reluctant about playing his instrument, we do a trade. I tell him that if he will make beautiful music for me, I will load the dishwasher. Sometimes I ask him to serenade me while I eat lunch. I tell him I love to hear him play.

Some advice to parents: Try to keep your sense of humor and the element of fun (p. 57). The world will not end if your child does not achieve perfection today; however, if you can laugh while you make music, your child will have a wonderful memory of you and of music. If today you don't succeed at doing all the practicing and listening, try harder tomorrow. Suzuki moms don't yell (p.63). But Suzuki moms do yell sometimes and so do Suzuki teachers. Am I advocating yelling? No. But we are human beings who sometimes get frustrated and angry for various reasons. This Suzuki adventure isn't just about music, but rather, while we are learning music, we become better human beings. When things do not go well, don't beat yourself up. Instead, be a true Suzuki parent and remind yourself of what you did well today.

One parent said, "There were many struggles when my son was young, but now he doesn't seem to remember them." I bet he will never forget how to play, and will remember the wonderful experiences he had when he had played his instruments. You might want to keep some inspirational parent books on hand for when you feel frazzled. Refer to them when you need a boost in motivation.

In conclusion, the perfect practice schedule is the one that fits your family's schedule. It might be really creative or seem very ordinary. It's what works well-for you and your family. What is common in the practice schedules and routines is the commitment of Suzuki parents to keep music in our children's lives, to always encourage our children to try their hardest to do well as they develop their musical skills, to teach them to try and try again when the road of practice gets a little rough to traverse, to effectively manage a busy schedule-all of which will help prepare them for adulthood. As a wise teacher said to me, today is just one day, there are 365 days of the year to get it right.



ASC Parent Education Sessions

All Aber Suzuki Center parents are encouraged to attend the Parent Education Sessions which are offered to you free of charge! Join the December session, **"Suzuki: Translating the Philosophy into Reality," Tuesday, December 8, at 7:30 pm in NFAC Room 144.**

Future sessions are as follows:

"Practicing, the Great Quest for Consistency without Boredom", February 9

"The Art of Reviewing with a Purpose", March 9

"Fostering Independent Learning" – BRING A FRIEND MEETING!, April 13

"You Decide the Topic" – details TBA, May 11



SAW's 5th Annual Weekend Workshop

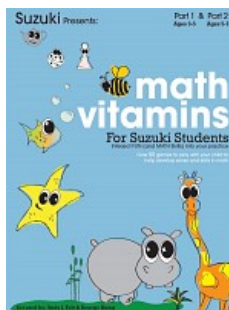
You are invited to the 5th Annual Suzuki Weekend Workshop sponsored by the Suzuki Association of Wisconsin. The workshop is for string and piano students and will take place January 22-24, 2010 at the Inn on the Park Hotel in Madison. This will be like a mini-institute. The weekend will include group lessons taught by teachers from the state and the guest clinician will be from Missouri. The workshop begins with a play-in, ice cream social and swimming on Friday night. Students will receive three instrumental group lessons and an enrichment class. Students can choose from a wide variety of music related classes such as Improvisation, Fiddling, Music Mind Games, Musopoly, two levels of Orchestra and yoga. There will also be a parent talk given by Ed Sprunger, author of *Helping Parents Practice: Ideas for making It Easier*. In addition, there will be a pizza party, and free tickets to the Madison Children's Museum and time for swimming. The weekend concludes with a concert in the Capitol rotunda.

Registration is \$80 for the first child and \$70 for siblings. Master classes are optional at a cost of \$20. A block of rooms have been reserved for workshop participants at a special rate starting at \$94. Parents must make their own hotel arrangements. See your teacher for your brochure, go to the ASC Facebook page or go to <http://www.suzukiassociationofwisconsin.com>.



Need Holiday Gift Ideas? Let ASC Help with Two Ideas!

Math Vitamins for Suzuki Students is a book of over 50 games for a parent and child (age 3-7). Each game helps the child develop math sense and skills. Some Suzuki parents sprinkle the math games into the practice to help make it more fun. Successful repetitions are rewarded by a turn at the *Math Vitamin* games.



For example, some games help the child learn the special partner numbers that add to ten, like seven and three. This is important, because "benchmarking to ten" makes it easier to later add numbers like seven and four. One such game is "Go Fish for Tens," which is much like "Go Fish," except that you look for pairs that add to ten rather than those that match.

The book comes with a game board that is used for most games and can be colored and personalized by the child. Each game has full instructions. Materials used are common household items like dice, cards and socks.

The authors, Andy Felt and George Kung, are Aber Suzuki Center dads and UWSP math professors and have donated the proceeds of their publication to the American Suzuki Foundation. We sincerely thank them for their generosity. *Math Vitamins for Suzuki Students*, \$17.50 is available at the ASC office.

Secondly, do you know of someone thinking of jewelry for a special person? Lee Ayers and Thomas Dailing have added the American Suzuki Foundation to their list of charitable organizations. If you purchase an item designed by Thomas Dailing you can designate the American Suzuki Foundation as the charitable organization to receive 10% of the purchase price. This offer is good throughout the year. Again, many thanks to Lee Ayers and Thomas Dailing for the "gift that keeps on giving!"

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And the Survey Says....

Teachers offer many ideas each week to help Suzuki families make practice fun, schedule listening time, devise review systems, etc., but parents are a creative bunch and they know how they've tweaked those ideas to work for their children in their family routine.

This column is an opportunity for parents to share their ideas with other parents and your teachers. On the first of each month each teacher will have a half sheet of paper with a question as to how parents put Suzuki principles into action. If you have an idea to share, please write it down. Then on the 20th of the month the suggestions will be collected and published in the next Ambassador. Pick up an answer sheet from your teacher, or from the bookcase in the ASC waiting room, and share your ideas by returning the answer sheet to your teacher, or drop it in the payment box in the waiting room. Or, join the discussion on our Facebook page! Then check out the next Ambassador's "And the Survey Says..." column to learn what techniques other parents have found work for them.

The question for November was: How do you make practice fun? How do you create a positive, musical learning environment?

- Now that our kids are in high school, they are responsible for their own practice. It helps to have a performance to prepare for. We encourage them to play at church, at community events, and parties. They get to prepare music in many different styles in solo, duet, and ensemble which makes it fun.
- When we're having problems staying focused, I'll give my daughter one mini-marshmallow, chocolate chip, or mini-rice cake after each song they play.
- We'll write all review songs on slips of paper, drawing one at a time to determine practice order for pieces.
- We'll have periodic family concerts, involving as many family members as possible with all family members playing along with the pieces they know (including Mom and Dad).
- We establish practice order for the week, alternating who practices first, second, and third each day so we don't have arguments about whose turn it is to practice on any given day.
- For our daughter, who is finishing up Violin Book 4, we have made up a practice chart where she reviews her entire repertoire once a week. She practices her working pieces and polished pieces every day. Our other two daughters are both at the end of Book 1 (viola and cello). They each play through their entire repertoire daily. Though Sunday is our family day of rest, each daughter practices only her working and polished pieces on Sundays.

- We have occasional "play dates" with other "Suzuki friends" where we bring along instruments and have unstructured fun playing together.
- When the weather is nice, we practice outside, occasionally at the park.
- Sometimes we combine practice time with a lemonade stand, entertaining passers-by, and sometimes getting good tips as well!
- We play games involving siblings in practice, such as having one sibling trying to distract another while the other is practicing a piece she knows well.
- When asking my 14 year old how we made practice fun when he was little, his response was "we didn't". I do remember using Smarties and gum as rewards. I am sorry to say after 15 years of the Suzuki Method and 4 children playing violin, I probably didn't make it very fun. I do remember filling in charts with stickers or coloring in circles, etc. But, now I have 4 happy violinists, ages 20, 18, 14 and 10, enjoying their accomplishments, earning a living, sharing their gifts, all without having a memory of "fun practices" – so instead of regretting not making it fun, or beating myself up for not being the "perfect Suzuki parent," I can still give myself a pat on the back for consistency and time spent one-on-one with each child. My oldest has even thanked me several times for the hours invested in practice time. It is worth every moment of practice in the end.
- The kids serenade their baby brother who loves to listen to the violins!

February's question: How, where and when do you listen?



We're on Facebook!

The Aber Suzuki Center is now on Facebook! Become a fan, post your favorite pictures, participate in discussions (including the "And the Survey Says..." question of the month), find information on upcoming events, or check out photos from past events! Several video clips of the Music of the Masters can be seen here as well! We hope to see you there!



Composer of the Month: Ludwig van Beethoven

By Ann Marie Novak

Ludwig van Beethoven was born on December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany. His young musical life was encouraged mostly by his grandfather, who was the choir director at the nearby palace. His grandfather recognized his talent, and frequently asked young Ludwig to come to the palace and listen to rehearsals. Unfortunately, his grandfather died when Ludwig was only a few years old. When Beethoven lost his grandfather, he lost a good friend and a major source of support, not only for his music, but also for himself, as a person. Beethoven's father was very hard on him, and he tried to push the young musician into making money to support the whole family. This was a very difficult thing for a young lad to do, but by the time he was about 12 years old, he was pretty much doing exactly that.

Ludwig started his piano lessons around age four, similar to the age at which our Suzuki students begin their studies. He studied first with his father, but things didn't go very well because of the way his father treated him. Ludwig seemed always to be getting in trouble with his father. His harpsichord (and later, piano) practices would start out just fine, but sooner or later, he would get off track and start making up his own pieces. His father then started teaching him to play the violin. But the same thing would happen...he would wander off into whatever came into his head.

In his early teens, Ludwig started conducting the orchestra and accompanying the opera rehearsals at the palace. Soon, the archbishop at the court noticed young Beethoven's amazing ability, and he sent him off to study with the great composer and performer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. This was a special opportunity for the young man...to work with the greatest living composer of that time! Mozart, who was only 14 years older than Beethoven, saw a very special ability in Ludwig. He (not being prone to giving much praise to other musicians) made it known to the musical community that this up and coming genius was someone to be heard...he felt that Ludwig would make a great name for himself.

The lessons with Mozart were not destined to last very long, however. Shortly after the move to Vienna, where Mozart lived, Beethoven was summoned back to Bonn, where his mother lay gravely ill. The fates were not kind to the young man. Shortly after his return, Beethoven's mother passed away. This affected Ludwig deeply, but he continued making money for the family through his job at the King's court. One of the "perks" of working there was that he started to branch out and meet other great musicians of the time.

One of those outstanding musicians was Franz Josef Haydn. Haydn encouraged Beethoven to move to Vienna (where Haydn lived) and to study composition with him. He did just

that, and the face of music was never to be the same again. As Beethoven gained confidence as a composer (he already was a gifted performer, particularly at the piano), he started to change many things that had always been "just so". He was single-handedly responsible for the development of the piano as an instrument, and he also changed the forms of pieces that had become accepted as the "right way" to write music. He was, in many ways, a rebel: he grew his hair long and let it go so that he looked a bit "wild"; he changed many musical conventions of the time; and he started making his compositions longer and more grand than ever before.

Ironically, the thing that made him so innovative, so demanding of more (of everything...sound, length of pieces, thicker textures) was the thing that was also the saddest fact of all. This amazingly gifted musician, a man who could hear and produce the most subtle and sublime sounds, was going deaf. He first realized that he was losing his hearing sometime in his early twenties. He struggled to keep his hearing loss from the public, so it is not known exactly when he became completely deaf. Historians estimate that his hearing was probably completely gone by sometime in his thirties. It is known that, at the time of the first performance of his 9th Symphony (the famous Choral Symphony), he heard nothing. When the piece concluded, there was thunderous applause for the composer...but he heard none of it. In fact, he had to be told to stand and take a bow, because he was completely unaware that the piece had ended and that everyone was applauding for many, many minutes.

The most remarkable thing about Beethoven's deafness was that it never stopped him from composing. He apparently could "hear" the music already formed in his head. It is true that his deafness made him depressed, it made him angry, and it made him frustrated, but it never stopped him. In fact, I believe that it gave him the "fire" we hear in so much of his music. Beethoven died on March 26, 1827 at age 57, pen and staff paper still in hand. He was one of the few composers who was truly famous in his own lifetime. It is estimated that somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people attended his funeral. The world of music has never been the same since this great composer walked the earth.

Sources:

Kendall, C. W. (1985). "Stories of Composers for Young Musicians". Kendall.
Elledge, C., Yarbrough, J., & Pearson, B. (1995). "Music Theory & History Workbook". San Diego: Neil A. Kjos.



Alumni News

Cellist **Chris Peck**, the son of Ed and JoAnne Peck, was named the winner in the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra's (CWSO) fourth annual CWSO Young Artist Competition. The biennial competition drew high-school aged musicians from the central Wisconsin area.

The Young Artist Competition Honorable Mention was awarded to oboist **Kelly Tillotson**, a Custer resident and student of UWSP Associate Professor of Oboe and Music Theory, Stacey Berk. Kelly also receives instruction at the Aber Suzuki Center in piano and voice.

Peck is a senior at SPASH and currently serves as principal cellist of the SPASH Orchestra, as well as the Central State Chamber Orchestra sponsored by the Aber Suzuki Center. He began his musical studies with piano lessons at the age of 5, and at 9 he began to study the cello in the Aber Suzuki Center program. His past teachers include Lawrence Leviton and Tim Mutschlecner. He now travels weekly from Stevens Point to Madison to study cello with Karl Lavine.

Peck has won numerous awards, including five times for Outstanding Performance at the District Solo and Ensemble Contest.

He was also selected three times for the Wisconsin State Honors Orchestra and was a finalist in the 2009 Fox Valley Concerto Competition. Though Peck was born in Hartford, CT, he considers himself a Wisconsin native, having lived here since he was 4.

Part of Peck's award is the opportunity to perform as a guest soloist with the CWSO during its "Holiday Extravaganza" concerts December 5 and 6 in Stevens Point. He will perform the first movement of Franz Joseph Haydn's virtuosic "Cello Concerto in C Major" with the full orchestra under the direction of guest conductor James Carpenter.



Student News

Aber Suzuki Center student, soprano, **Mikaela Schneider**, 15, of Greendale, WI, a student of Mary Hofer, sang Schubert's *Ave Maria* with the Milwaukee Symphony at their holiday concert this past weekend. Guest conductor, **Marvin Hamlisch** (also conductor of the National Symphony Pops Orchestra), was so impressed with her performance that he asked her on the spot to sing four concerts at the Kennedy Center this coming weekend December 12 and 13! Hopefully, during rehearsal she will get to visit with ASC

alumni, Joel Fuller, violinist in the National Symphony Orchestra. Last year, Mikaela sang the soprano solo with the MSO in Bernstein's *Chittchester Psalms*.

CONGRATULATIONS Mikaela and Mrs. Hofer!! We are all proud and happy for you!

ASC students **Wade Dittburner, Lucas Chan, Teddy Schenkman, Emily Clay, Olivia Yang, Courtney Cates, Olivia Heese, Julia Zinda, Anjali Iyengar, Natalie Leek, Timothy Hofer, Sam Ginnett, Victoria Tillotson, Catriona Quirk, Michael Treder, Kayla Cates, Tom Felt, Marco Kurzynski, Kate Young, Hope Mahon, Havilah Vang and Roshini Traynor** performed a variety of Holiday selections as CWSO intermission music Saturday, December 5th.



Will Mitchell performed *Julie-O* by Mark Summer November 15 at a fundraising concert directed by Tim Mutschlecner at St. Pauls UMC. Tim's new CD of music heard at this concert is available in the Suzuki office.

Congratulations to **Emily Clay** in her successful lead role in a *Fiddler on the Roof* production in Westfield.

The **CSCO** will perform their Holiday Concert at the Lincoln Center on Saturday, December 19 at 2:00 pm.



Faculty News

Dave Becker conducted the UWSP Symphony Orchestra during the 2009 fall semester while Patrick Miles was on sabbatical. On October 14 the orchestra performed the Concerto Grosso, Opus 6, No. 8 by Arcangelo Corelli followed by the Grand Duo for Solo Violin and Solo Double

Bass by Giovanni Bottesini with Steven Bjella (violin) and David Story (double bass) as soloists. The concert concluded with the Symphony No. 88 in G major by Franz Joseph Haydn. The UWSP Symphony Orchestra finished its fall semester performances with a pair of concerts featuring the Mass in C, Op 86 by Ludwig van Beethoven. Becker prepared the orchestra for the Beethoven and the performances were conducted by Lucinda Thayer of the UWSP choral department.



The next issue of the AMBASSADOR will be published
February 2010

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

