



# Twinkling The Ivories

September 2011

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## The Road Ahead: Reflections on the Suzuki Journey

***“Confronted with a high mountain, you cannot reach the summit in one stride, but must climb step by step to approach your goal. There may be difficulties and hardships, but not disappointment or despair if you follow the path steadily. Do not hurry . . . Do not rest in your efforts . . . Without stopping, without haste, carefully taking a step at a time forward will surely get you there.”*** – Shinichi Suzuki

I always love this time of year. It is the perfect time to establish the environment for success. As the leaves change from bright green to a multitude of beautiful colors, students excitedly fill their backpacks with new school supplies and anxiously await the first day of school. Teachers decorate classrooms, refine resources and develop lesson plans to engage their bright-eyed students. Parents calm worries with a hug and a smile, and hurriedly bustle around ensuring that everything is in place for a successful start to the school year. Happily anticipating the year ahead, your child’s music teacher is also busily preparing schedules, planning group lessons, and arranging inspiring musical opportunities.

Enjoy the Suzuki journey. The road ahead is an exciting one for your family but it will also call on your bravery and patience as you encourage your child to review for mastery and confidently succeed step by step. SAA violin teacher, Edmund Sprunger, considers home practice to be the process of making things easier. When children have a routine to practice and listen to repertoire every day, receive positive encouragement, have fun during practice sessions, and actively engage with other students learning the repertoire at group lessons, learning music is easier. If you encounter bumps in the road, listen more, practice more, have more fun and seek the advice of your Suzuki teacher and other Suzuki parents. Help them concentrate on balanced posture, pleasing tone, technical accuracy, musicianship and confidence as they master their first bow, Twinkle A, playing with two hands, Book 2 and so many more attractions along the way. And don’t forget to enjoy the detours your children often take – jazzy renditions, playing with their eyes closed, impromptu concerts for friends or stuffed animals, or trying to recreate their favourite songs from the radio. Remember also to guide your children to focus on the big picture vision of a beautiful heart. As Suzuki stated, “Music exists for the purpose of growing an admirable heart.”

I have loved every step along my own Suzuki journey as ESPS board member and president over the years, but with my exciting new role as Principal of Suzuki Charter School, I have chosen to resign from the ESPS board of directors. I have appreciated the opportunity to work with such wonderful children, inspiring teachers, an exceptional administrator, talented teacher representative, thoughtful parents and dedicated board members. Thank you for making my journey a fun and adventurous one.

*Karen Spencer*

## Getting Creative: How I Survived My First Year as a Suzuki Parent

Fifteen minutes. When I think of fifteen minutes I think of the phrase, "You can do anything for fifteen minutes." It is only a quarter of an hour and is really hardly any time at all; until you have a stubborn four-year-old child sitting on a piano bench. That is when fifteen minutes can feel like an eternity.

My child, Joshua, just finished his first full year of Suzuki Piano and every day of practice was an adventure. Some days would be so easy, he would come when I called and practice would go smoothly. Before I knew it, practice had flown by and we were done for the day. These are not the times I am going to write about. I am going to write about the days I physically had to carry him to the piano bench where he would immediately slump down over the piano keys, refusing to sit up straight and scowl at me like I was the meanest person in existence. These were the type of days that I had to get creative and try to make the piano fun and interesting.

Over time, I tried a lot of different things and some worked better than others. I felt a real sense of accomplishment when something did work. I also began to feel like it was a bonding experience between my son and me. I have three other children so this was time where it was just us - one on one, and I think we both enjoyed it... most of the time.

The most important thing to remember about the first year is to enjoy yourself, and help your child enjoy their time as well. I have heard it said that it is more important to practice for a short time everyday than once a week for an hour and a half. On difficult days I would sit with my son and clap rhythms at the piano or listen to his CD. This way we were still making it to the piano and building those habits he will need.

I asked Joshua what his favourite piano games were this year and here they are:

1. *Building Mr. Potato Head*: Every time he played his piece (or section of a piece if we were learning a new song) he got to put a piece of Mr. Potato head together.
2. *Building Lego*: This is the same as above but with Lego.
3. *Sips of juice*: I know this sounds lame, but he loved it! He got to take a sip of his juice every time he played a song.
4. *Dice Games*: Roll the dice and use the number to determine how many times you get to play the song or section you are working on.
5. *Glass Beads*: I have a collection of glass beads and he loves those so I incorporated them by letting him choose ten. With every piece he played he put one away, and once they were gone he was done. You could also try this with pennies or even candies.
6. *Nerf Gun Games*: We have a Nerf gun that has velcro darts and a dart board and he was allowed to shoot one at the dart board to find out how many times he had to play a piece. Alternately I gave him ten darts and he got to shoot one after every time he played the piece we were working on.

I feel like practicing the piano with your child is an opportunity. It gives you time to devote to them and it helps them build the confidence they need to succeed in their lives. The best advice I can give is to not give up. You will definitely have bad days but you will also have great days. Do not be too hard on yourself if things don't go perfectly, do the best you can and delight in the successes.

Nicole Palmer

## Excellence from the Beginning: Ensuring Your Beginner (Or Older Student!) Has a Successful Lesson

### Preparation on Lesson Day

- Mention to your child early in the day that it's lesson day.
- Mention it periodically throughout the day with enthusiasm and interest.
- Play the Suzuki CD, focussing on the songs that your child is learning.

### Preparation Before Departure and on the way to the Studio

- Offer your child a healthy snack.
- Allow plenty of time to get to the lesson – no one enjoys feeling rushed.
- Listen to the Suzuki CD in the car.
- Arrive at the studio quietly, remove outerwear, and if there is a lesson in progress, sit down and listen to the lesson.
- Please remember to be as quiet as possible. While you are waiting, you are actually preparing your child to focus and concentrate on his/her lesson.

### What to Bring to the Lesson

- Your Suzuki repertoire book.
- Your Practice Guide and a pencil for note taking.
- Refrain from bringing toys or other items that might distract your child during the lesson.

### During Your Child's Lesson

- During your child's lesson, you are the "silent partner." As an observer, your role is to simply watch, listen, and take notes.
- Questions and comments can break your child's focus, so save them for the end of lesson time.

### Praise

- A show of affection for your child, such as a hug, smile, or high five, is usually well received at the end of the lesson. This kind of non-verbal communication demonstrates unconditional love for your child.
- Children know when they are being patronized, so be very careful and honest about your praising.

### Stop While You are Ahead

- If your teacher notices that your child's attention span is waning, she may conclude the lesson, regardless of what time it is, for to continue would be counter-productive.

## Register for the Parent Class!

Designed especially for our new ESPS families, our final orientation session for 2011 will be offered on Saturday, September 17, 2011 from 9:00 – 12:00 in Room 4/5 at Suzuki Charter School (10720 54 Street). If you did not attend our May class, please plan to attend this important session.

This introductory session will look at the philosophy behind the Suzuki approach, discuss strategies for successful practicing at home, and provide an introduction to note reading for parents with no previous musical experience.

To register, please speak with your teacher.

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## Respecting Our Neighbours at Suzuki Charter School

For those ESPS families who will attend group classes or other special events at Suzuki Charter School (10720 54 Street), please be respectful of the school's traffic and parking plans and follow the guidelines below:

- Parents attending group classes in the evening or on weekends are asked to park in the school parking lot in order to minimize congestion on the streets. **Access to the building will be through the entrance nearest the parking lot, on the north side of the building.**
- Should the parking lot be full, parents who must park on the street may use the school side of 107 Avenue or Capilano Street. PLEASE DO NOT PARK ON THE RESIDENTIAL SIDE OF THE STREET. There are a number of openings in the fence for students to gain access to the school grounds.
- Please note that families should not park at the Capilano Community League site.

**Parents who have smiling faces have children who have smiling faces.**

**-Shinichi Suzuki**

## Annual General Meeting – September 28, 2011

All parents are asked to attend our Annual General Meeting, to be held 7:30 pm on September 28, 2011 at Suzuki Charter School. In addition to reporting on our year and presenting of our audited financial statements, we'll also be holding elections for membership on our Board of Directors.

We're looking for parents to serve as volunteers on the Board. No previous Board experience is required; rather, we are looking for parent representatives who are committed to providing their children a positive musical education and who are interested in helping to shape the future direction of Edmonton Suzuki Piano School. Whether you've been an ESPS member for one year or ten, your perspective is valuable!

If you are interested in getting involved with the Board of Directors, please contact Kim Green at 780.488.0548 for more information.

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## Fall Institute – November 5 & 6th, 2011

Mark your calendars and plan to attend our largest Suzuki piano event of the year, the Fall Institute!

Each year, the Fall Institute offers master classes, parent sessions, and a special enrichment activity, all designed to help motivate you and your child. This fall, we welcome guest teachers that include Nicole Elliott, Susan Magnusson, and Merlin Thompson.

The Institute offers many benefits for your family: children can find it motivating to prepare and perform a piece for a special event; they have the opportunity to learn from a visiting teacher, and observe other students they might not normally know. Every family, including those with beginner students, is encouraged to attend. Students can register to participate or just to observe sessions.

Watch for registration information at your teacher's studio later in September.

## Children's Art Tax Credit

Recently, the federal government introduced the Children's Art Tax Credit (CATC), a new non-refundable tax credit based on expenses paid for the cost of your child's participation in a program of artistic, cultural, or recreational activity.

Beginning in the 2011 tax year, the CATC will let families claim eligible expense of up to \$500 per year for each of your children under the age of 16 (18 if your child is eligible for the disability tax credit).

Eligible activities include programs that contribute to the development of creative skills or expertise in artistic or cultural activities. Artistic and cultural activities include literary arts, visual arts, performing arts, music, media, languages, customs and heritage.

Organizations that provide eligible arts programs should provide receipts that outline the eligible activity, name the participating children, and the amount of fees paid for the activity.

Your piano teacher will provide you with a receipt for your tuition fees paid in the 2011 year no later than early 2012. Additionally ESPS will provide receipts for registration fees paid each year.

If you have questions about the new Children's Art Tax Credit, please visit the Canada Revenue Agency website ([www.cra-arc.gc.ca](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca)).

### 2011-2012 Calendar

**September 17, 2011** *Parent Class for New Families*

**September 28, 2011** *Annual General Meeting*

**October 23, 2011** *Graduation*

**November 5 & 6, 2011** *Fall Institute*

**January 22, 2012** *Graduation*

**February 5, 12, & 26, 2012** *Winter Recitals, Suzuki Charter School*

**March 18, 2012** *Graduation*

**April 21, 2012** *Spring Festival*

**June 3, 2012** *Group Concert*

**June 10 & 17, 2012** *Summer Recitals, Convocation Hall*

**June 24, 2012** *Graduation*