



Twinkling The Ivories

December 2007

“All children are born with great potential.”

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Greetings!

On behalf of the executive, greetings to all the families and friends in the Edmonton Suzuki Piano School! In an effort to improve communication with all of our Suzuki families, the ESPS has instituted a monthly “e-notice” to keep you up-to-date on all of the activities of your board. This only works, of course, if we have your e-mail address! Please send your address to administrator@edmontonsuzukipiano.ca if you have not already done so. As well, we would encourage all of you to visit our website frequently, as it is updated monthly. The address for the site is www.edmontonsuzukipiano.ca. Sincere thanks to Betty Lee for making all of these technological advances possible.



October was an exciting month for our community with the arrival of Edmund Sprunger. This experienced music teacher has taught violin for over 20 years in his home studio and has spoken at over 150 institutes, workshops, and master classes throughout the U.S. and Canada. In speaking with those who had attended his workshops, it was clear that he made a lasting impression on his listeners here in Edmonton. For those of you who might have missed some or all of the sessions, you can still catch the flavour of his ideas in his book, entitled, Helping Parents Practice: Ideas for Making it Easier (Vol. I).

November was not going to let itself be eclipsed by a flashy October. The Fall Institute concluded on November 4th and, by all accounts, was a success. Many thanks to the Master Teachers who travelled long distances and to our own teachers whose assistance was crucial at all levels of the Fall Institute. Thanks also to the parents who volunteered their time and efforts and to all those who attended this celebration of learning. It is certain that the upcoming holidays and new year will bring many joyful moments for all of us in the Suzuki community and we look forward to sharing them with you. Happy practicing until then!

Shannon Prithipaul
Co-President of the ESPS

Boost Your Brain - Read a Book!

“We must recognize that we were born as wonderful human beings with limitless possibilities. A person is not born uninteresting. He is trained to be ordinary.”

– Shinichi Suzuki, excerpt from *Ability Development From Age Zero*

Many hands make work light

Consider volunteering for a board position:

Social

This position is responsible for arranging the refreshments at the Spring Festival and graduations.

If you are interested, please contact the ESPS Administrator at administrator@edmontonsuzukipiano.ca.

Edmund Sprunger Workshop, October 2007

Practice Basics

Thanks to Karen Spencer for sharing her notes.

This session covered topics such as the importance of listening to reference recordings, taking accurate lesson notes, dealing with children's frustrations, and reviewing repertoire. Edmund supports the idea that attending to the basic ingredients of practice also increases the likelihood that practices will be both pleasant and productive.

- **Focus on making things easier.** Focus on basic solutions, not drastic changes. Look for horses, instead of zebras. Focus on making things easier, instead of fixing, improving or enduring. Ask the question, "Was it easy?" Students should practice because it is not easy yet. Build in ownership by voicing, "It'll be easier for you if you practice it." This type of practice will lead to a focus on musicianship and physical security.
- **Show up at lessons.** The parent who practices with the child should be the one who is at the lesson. The non-practicing parent is welcome to come along as well. How you approach the lesson is how the child will approach the lesson. Do you arrive early or rush in without notepaper and pencil? Edmund has a rule that if the parent can't attend a lesson, then the child will not have a lesson.
- **Take useful notes.** By taking notes, you free your child to be involved in the lesson and not with the details of the lesson. The job of the parent is to get information as accurately as possible and then reconstruct it with the child at home. Practicing is not about getting the right notes. It is about supporting musical development. The music is just the vehicle to develop. Edmund shared an analogy about how the practice is about planting and tending a crop, but that it's the crop that does the growing. He suggested that a parent notebook should contain one piece of paper for every piece of Suzuki repertoire. These pages should then be added to over time with the current process of practice suggested by the music teacher to build and improve skills.
- **Participate in group classes.** It solves **sooo** many problems.
- **Listen to the recordings.** Twinkle variations tend to be learned by directed teaching or rote, but after that basic mechanics are in place and students really play by ear. They should begin to guess or choose which notes come next. Teachers shouldn't teach every note. They should teach the process of learning notes. Learning is difficult if a student is not listening to the recordings; it's like "musical oxygen". A Suzuki parent does not need to be musical.
- **Talk about what's working and repeat it.** "That was great; do it again." Edmund shared an analogy about asking a friend what to bring to a potluck. How would you react if your friend said, "Bring your delicious cheesecake brownies"? Your reaction would be very different if your friend said, "Bring your tuna casserole, but could you maybe add a little less salt this time."
- **Shoot one arrow at a time.** Choose carefully when deciding what skill to focus on and what process to use to develop the skill. Give concrete pertinent information. For example, don't talk about focus; develop it.
- **Don't interrupt.** It's like reading a book and someone tells you the ending. Sometimes it is so much better to be able to figure it out yourself.
- **Review the repertoire to make learning easier.** Review is playing pieces. The bulk of practice time should be on review.
- **Empathize.** Acknowledge your child's feelings. It's easy to deal with the Disney-type feelings but it's really important to acknowledge the darker feelings to help students learn to manage them. Don't pretend that they don't exist.
- **Choose a reasonable time to practice.**
- **Ask; don't tell.** Give limited healthy choices. Control is a basic human need. Make demands that are clear, gentle and firm, but look for opportunities to be flexible.
- **Find ways of enjoying the trip.** Dive in. Make mistakes and reap the rewards!

Graduations

Congratulations to the following students for their hard work and well-deserved graduations:

Volume 1

Nicholas Brubaker
Erin Paetsch
Amin Walji

Volume 2

Julie Fagnan
Yuri Kohan
Vivian Wong

Volume 3

Rachel Lumsden

Volume 4

Mimosa Bui

Volume 5

Ondra Chan

Volume 6

Vance Weir

Congratulations to the parents as well for enabling and supporting the students:

*One cannot look at a small child and randomly choose what he does well and what he does poorly. I have repeated many times that more important than whether one **is talented** or not is a good environment in which a child will **become talented**.*

- Shinichi Suzuki