



Twinkling The Ivories

September 2010

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Welcome Back!

Welcome back to another year of Suzuki piano! 2010-2011 promises to be another great year for ESPS as we see some exciting changes and the return of some family favourites. Read carefully, as this edition of the newsletter outlines many of the events we can all look forward to this year.

Mark Your Calendars: Upcoming Events

Annual General Meeting

7:30 PM Wednesday, September 29, 2010
Suzuki Charter School (10720 54 Street – please note the new address)

For those of you who have questions about ESPS, who are interested in getting involved with our Board of Directors, or just want to have a look at the new home of Suzuki Charter School, please consider attending this important meeting. We have positions vacant for members-at-large on our Board of Directors. If you are interested in helping to shape the future direction of ESPS, like to share ideas and are able to meet once a month, please contact Kim Green at 780.488.0548.

Guest Speaker and Suzuki parent Mildred Thill (EFT-CERT I) will give a short demonstration on 2 techniques that she has used to help her son Kevin in his musical journey. Brain Gym, originally developed as a method to help children read; and EFT, a combination of mindfulness therapy and acupressure; have both been used effectively by people with learning issues. A take-away practice worksheet will be available at the end of the meeting. Bring your water bottle in order to get the most from this mini-workshop. You can find out more about EFT at www.emofree.ca or www.EFTuniverse.com

Fall Institute

November 6-7th, 2010
Suzuki Charter School (10720 54 Street – please note the new address)

Edmonton Suzuki Piano School is pleased to announce our upcoming annual Fall Institute. This is our largest Suzuki piano event of the year, and it features a unique learning opportunity for your family.

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 Lori Armstrong, Susan Magnusson, and Merlin Thompson.

The Institute offers many benefits for your family: children can find it motivating to prepare 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 and forms at your teacher's studio near the end of September.

Where's the Fun in Suzuki?

Jacqueline, my 13-year-old niece and **not** a Suzuki student, will soon be taking the grade eight Royal Conservatory Piano exam. She practices for at least 1.5 hours on weekdays and two hours on weekends. I'm impressed. "Wow, you must really like piano!" I say. She confesses, "I like it when people compliment my playing. But I hate practicing." Sounds familiar. With two boys (ages 10 and 13) in Suzuki piano, the whining in our house seems ever constant and present like the hum of the fridge in the kitchen!

"What is the Suzuki method?" Jacqueline asks me. I explain, "Well, Suzuki focuses more on listening in the beginning. And parents are heavily involved in the learning, that is, we attend the lessons and help with daily practices." After that, I was lost for words. Not having learned music myself, I couldn't intelligently, logically, or empirically explain the differences between Royal Conservatory and Suzuki.

For a moment, I mentally beat myself up for being an ESPS board member and not being able to spew out all the benefits of Suzuki piano in a heartbeat. Like the unspoken, virtual commandments in the piano parents' decree, such as "THOU SHALL EXHIBIT UNENDING PATIENCE." and "THOU SHALT NOT PUSH THY PIANO OUT THE WINDOW!" I felt I should have been able to recite all the reasons for why we struggle on a weekly basis.

Suddenly my mind wandered to the group lessons. "One of the nice things about Suzuki is the group lessons," I continued. "Little kids like Justin (my 4-year-old) would have a hard time learning theory. Most can't even read yet." Then I described in detail some of the games they play: the musical BINGO to learn the quarter, half and eighth notes; the clapping games to learn beats; the word games to learn rhythm, like "pine-ap-ple" for the triplet. Unfortunately, I can only remember a handful of games as I buckle under the pressure to impress my young niece.

"In group lessons, they get to play with other kids too. So you're not just learning this stuff by yourself."

"Wow that sounds like fun!" She's impressed after all. Jacqueline had never heard of playing games to learn music. For the older students, interactive activities reinforce music theory more excitedly than by just doing theory exercises in a book. "A fun, positive environment also enhances your retention."

"The teachers spend a lot of time thinking of activities to do and humorous anecdotes to reinforce concepts." They meet monthly to share what they and others, such as the Charter school, are doing so that the kids remain challenged and not bored because "I learned this already!"

Group lessons can be especially helpful for shy kids. As one teacher told me, "The group lessons have helped [one of her older students] come out of his shell. During private lessons when he is one-on-one with me, he doesn't like to speak out. But when he is in a group with his peers, he's much more vocal and interactive." Of course for the "social butterflies", group lessons are a welcoming distraction. "It's a great way to make friends and learn piano at the same time." says a board member who recalls how her daughter, then a teen, looked forward to the monthly groups where they played ensembles. "Piano is a lonely activity when you are a social critter. Working on and then performing pieces with kids her age was motivating in itself. No parent nagging was required. When they performed at their concert, they had all collaborated, unbeknown to their teachers, to "choreograph" their own version of the formal Suzuki bow that truly made it their own performance. For a parent, it doesn't get any better than that."

As a parent, group lessons offer a wonderful opportunity to benefit from another teacher's perspective. I do not know of any other piano group that offers the kids a chance to learn from another teacher all year long. Of course, group lessons are just one of many positive aspects that set Suzuki apart from traditional methods. There are the specially chosen pieces of the Suzuki repertoire, the posture and finger techniques, the listening aspect, and so much more. A participatory (versus competitive) environment is another plus. "My kids can hardly wait for their recitals – not only to play the pieces they've worked so hard on, but also because they look forward to seeing what their teacher is going to play." smiles Ross, father of two boys in piano. "It's fun for them to see their teacher work hard on his own composition – just like they do."

After showing my niece a glimpse of the Suzuki world, I found myself appreciating Suzuki piano even more. I had forgotten a lot of the advantages Suzuki piano offers, and how much effort is put in by the teachers to make piano FUN on a regular basis and not just during performances.

I told her, "So much of your life is spent on piano right now. If it's not fun, then what's the point?!" I realized that I was really educating myself. I remember that Dr. Suzuki did not just emphasize parent involvement, but **enjoyment**.

"Adults may want to teach numbers or mathematics, but a child wants to be petted and have fun playing. If training can be combined with the fun, the child has the power to do things which surprise adults." (Suzuki, *Ability Development from Age Zero*)

During my self-education, I found renewed appreciation...for the group lessons, for the extra tools/toys/games regularly offered, and for the extra touches by the teachers to make the lessons FUN! Finally, I added another commandment to my piano parent's decree:

IF IT'S NOT FUN, THEN WHAT'S THE POINT?!

Betty Lee, Suzuki Piano Parent

Lesson Notes Pages – Get Them Online!

Are you in need of refill pages for your ESPS practice binders? Do you want something a little different? Do you want a better way to track repetitions? Check out the ESPS website

(www.edmontonsuzukipiano.ca) for a selection of practice pages available for you to download and print.

Or, if you have a page of your own that you've developed over time, and wouldn't mind sharing, then please contact Kim Green at 780.488.0548. We'd love to have even more ideas for practice notes to share with ESPS members.

If you are new to ESPS, watch for your own tote bag and practice binder to arrive at your teacher's studio.

Welcome to Rhonda McEachen

ESPS members will notice a new face among our teachers. Rhonda McEachen is an experienced Suzuki parent that we are pleased to welcome as a new group and individual lesson teacher in the Lansdowne area of Edmonton.

Rhonda grew up in rural Southwestern Ontario and started piano lessons at age 6. She was a Suzuki piano student and also attained her Grade 10 Piano through the Royal Conservatory. She received her Bachelor of Music Education in 1998 and her Bachelor of Education in 1999, both from the University of Western Ontario.

Rhonda regularly plays music at church and directs two choirs. She also plays with the Edmonton Samba School, a percussion ensemble. Other than musical activities, she enjoys playing Ultimate Frisbee, hockey and sports of all kinds.

Rhonda has taught piano for about 9 years and she is excited to start teaching Suzuki Piano. Look for Rhonda at our next Suzuki event and extend her a warm Suzuki welcome.

Practice Tip

Let chance dictate what to practice: use a spinner to determine pieces, dice to determine the number of repetitions, or make a bingo game with practice pieces or drilling spots.

Marilyn Andersen, Master Teacher, 2008 ESPS Fall Institute

Congratulation to recent ESPS Book 7 graduate Brianna Koller, who was recently awarded a scholarship to study piano performance at the University of Manitoba!

CALENDAR 2010-2011

Annual General Meeting	September 29, 2010
Fall Graduation	October 17, 2010
Fall Institute	November 5-7, 2010
Winter Graduation	January 23, 2011
Winter Recitals	February 6 & 27, 2011
Casino	March 4 & 5, 2011
Spring Graduation	March 13, 2011
Spring Festival	April 30, 2011
Group Concert	May 29, 2011
Summer Graduation	June 19, 2011
Year End Recitals	June 5 & 12, 2011

Orange Jackets

You may have attended a recent ESPS event and noticed some folks wearing bright orange ESPS jackets. They're our Board of Directors, and they're wearing the jackets in part to increase awareness of ESPS and our society. So, if you have a question, want to give us some feedback, or just need to find out when the date of the next recital is, look for an orange jacket....board members are standing by!



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

A New Location for Suzuki Charter School – 10720 54 Street

ESPS partner Suzuki Charter School has recently moved to a new location. SCS joins the Capilano neighbourhood as it makes its new home in the former Capilano School. Located at 10720 54 Street, the new school features many more classrooms, expanded music studio space, and a larger gym and performance spaces.

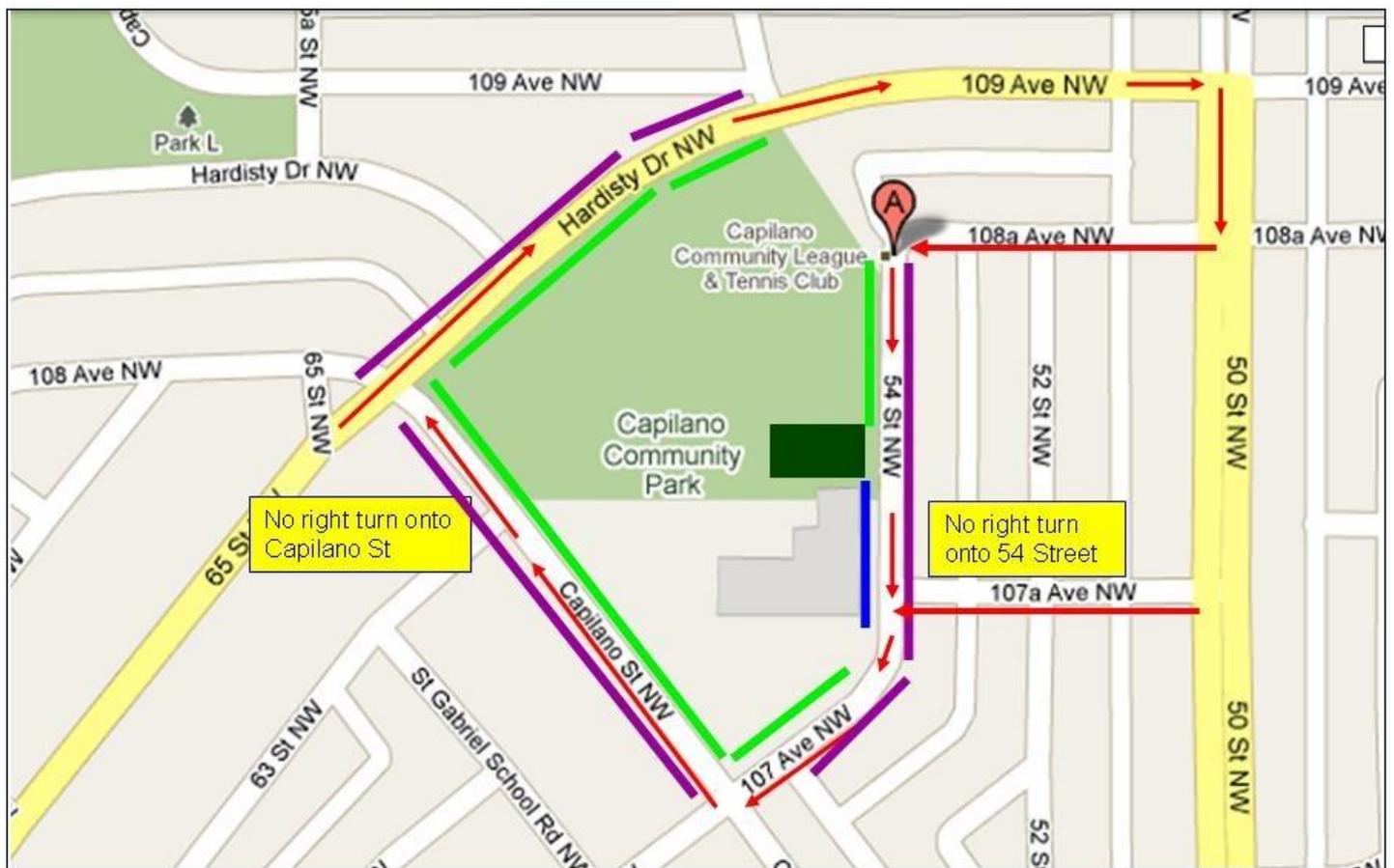
For those ESPS families who will attend group classes or other special events at Suzuki Charter School, please be respectful of the school's traffic and parking plans and follow the guidelines below:

- 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.

Please refer to the map below that shows planned traffic flow and parking. Your cooperation and willingness to be a "good neighbour" is appreciated.



Suzuki Charter School Traffic Flow & Parking Map 2010-2011



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|-------------------------|----------------|--|
| Traffic Flow | Drop Off Zone | There is absolutely NO PARKING on the residential side of 54 Street, Capilano Street, or Hardisty Drive |
| Evening/Weekend Parking | Parent Parking | |