



# Twinkling The Ivories

January 2013



## A Sense of Awe: Approaching Piano Practice the Suzuki Way

At our most recent Fall Institute, Keynote Speaker and Guest Teacher Silvija Abols addressed the question that every parent asks: How do I help my children practice?

Ms. Abols began her discussion by outlining two key essential traits possessed by Dr. Suzuki: 1) Being in Awe, and 2) Establishing Basic Skills. Dr. Suzuki was able to approach the challenge of teaching children with a sense of awe. He was able to see what others were not able to; that every child is born with the ability to learn language, which is complex and challenging. To others this fact was simple and normal, yet to Dr. Suzuki it was "worthy of wonder and fear". As a result, Ms. Abols says that Dr. Suzuki was able to approach teaching beautifully, by listening to and respecting his students. He was able to create a relaxed teaching environment by paying attention to their energy and attempting to understand their needs. She suggested that before becoming frustrated with a child who is not engaged in the lesson, one should ask him/herself what is it that s/he needs? *Did the child have a bad day at school? Did she eat a good lunch? Does he need some down time?*

Ms. Abols reminded parents that by having their children learn to play the piano they have signed up for a very complex and interesting task. Even before learning to play the piano well, a child must learn how to *play the piano; practice the piano; read music; perform in public; and perform with other musicians*. Furthermore, she noted that Dr. Suzuki teaches that children should learn the following basic skills before being able to accomplish any of the above skills: a) Respect (for self, others, parents and teacher); b) Ability to be still (to control the body, focus visually, to get ready and prepare for work); c) Ability to Listen (to simple and complex instructions, to pitch, harmony and rhythm, and to others); and the d) Ability to Work (to do one thing at a time with excellence, to analyze a problem and break it down into achievable steps, to persevere when something is difficult). She reminded us that these basic skills are also important in everyday life.

Ms. Abols was inspiring to listen to as she reflected on her experiences as a student under Dr. Suzuki, as a Suzuki parent, as a Suzuki educator and as the child of a hard-working Russian immigrant father, who spent every evening with her as a child teaching her how to spell. He was the best "Suzuki" teacher she had ever known. In conclusion, she provided the following tips as the basics to help your children want to practice:

- 1) *Show that you want to spend time with your child.* As a parent, take the opportunity of practice time as a special time set aside for just the two of you.
- 2) *Observe other lessons.* Unlike other activities, which tend to be team-based, piano is an independent activity. By observing other students, the child understands that they form part of a bigger community.
- 3) *Play the CD and other music.* The more you listen the faster you learn.
- 4) *Use the Power of Ready, Go.* Ready is a very big word, which signals to the child's mind to pay attention. Do not interrupt them.

Carolina Calderon

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### Contact ESPS

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### Help Wanted: Display Board

Do you have a flair for decorating or a creative eye? Do you spend time at Suzuki Charter School on a regular basis? ESPS is looking for the services of a volunteer to decorate and maintain our display board in the hall outside Room 4/5 at SCS. Help turn this space into a great resource for ESPS families!  
For more information, please contact Kim at 780.488.0548.

## Treasuring Practice Time With Your Child: More Thoughts From the Fall Institute

We have participated in the Fall Institute for a number of years, but this year was especially helpful because I attended the parent session by Silvija Abols. It was highly recommended by my son's teacher, and I'm so pleased that I attended.

Even after a couple of months, I can still remember some of the great ideas and experiences that Silvija shared, which ultimately affected my thoughts and attitudes towards my son's practice. As a long-time piano parent, I do know how I'm supposed to "behave" during his practice, but I still need a reminder sometimes. Now I'm determined to try again:

- Treasure the limited bonding time during the practice with smiles, care and lots of compliments and encouragement. When a child gets older, the bonding time gets less and less.
- Let the teacher be the "bad guy" to correct the child's mistakes. Parents should be the "good guys" to enjoy the moments together.
- The importance of listening to the working piece(s) every day and as often as possible, even during sleep – that's how to get the most bang for your buck!! Passive listening is key.
- Use "Ready" and "Go" to get the child to focus on what he is about to play.
- Do not interrupt and offer comments in the middle of playing a piece, which doesn't show respect. It can negatively affect the child's performance and focus.
- Let the child observe other children's practice. When he sees other children with the same difficulties, but then eventually overcome and master the skills, this will greatly increase his confidence and attitude towards improving the pieces.

I have applied what I learned from Silvija, and it seems to be working. We feel better and are having a more relaxed time during the practice!

June Kon

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## Coming Soon - February Recitals at SCS

Recital season is upon us and many of our students are already busy preparing a piece for our winter recitals. Please take a moment and remember some important concert etiquette as this special day approaches.

- **Dress up for your recital!** This is a special occasion! Jeans, T-shirts, shorts, and messy running shoes or boots are not appropriate.
- **Arrive early so you do not feel rushed before your performance.** No one likes to disrupt other musicians or guests by arriving late.
- **Invite your family and friends.** Share in the excitement of your accomplishment!
- **Be respectful during the performances.** Sit quietly and attentively during the performances. Sound carries in the gym, so whispering, paper rustling or a beeping camera can distract other guests. Should you need to leave the gym, wait until there is a break in the program. When you return, wait outside until there is a break in performances before taking your seat.

## January 2013 Graduations

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

### Volume 1

Loel Jans  
Tiffany Phan  
Dan Zhang

### Volume 2

Sophia Salouk

### Volume 3

Ksenia Pankratyeva  
Thaddaeus Truong

### Volume 4

Luka Morita

*Art is not in some far-off place. A work of art is the expression of a man's whole personality, sensibility and ability.*

Shinichi Suzuki

## Upcoming Events – 2012/13 Calendar

February 3, 2013 Winter Recitals for Nancy, Ruth, Melanie and Rhonda, Suzuki Charter School

February 10, 2013 Winter Recitals for Alla, Tess and Tim, Suzuki Charter School

February 24, 2013 Winter Recitals for Eleanor and Ken, Suzuki Charter School

March 16, 2013 Spring Festival, Suzuki Charter School

April 14, 2013 Graduation Ceremony, Muttart Hall

May 26, 2013 Group Concert, Suzuki Charter School

June 2, 2013 Graduation, Muttart Hall

June 9 & 23, 2013 Summer Recitals, Location TBA