



Twinkling The Ivories

April 2013

Board of Directors

Betty Lee
Lori Demeriez
Don Dyck
Tammy Field-Compri
Rolinda Graham
Geeta Passi-Shourie
Karen Spencer
Beata Zitnansky
Merrie Zubritsky

Teachers

Melanie Bodnar
Tess Brown
Tim Eckert
Ruth Johnson
Rhonda McEachen
Alla Rekhson
Joyce Sipsas
Nancy Thornhill
Eleanor Tsui
Ken Zeller

Administrator

Kim Green

Contact ESPS

Phone 780.488.0548
Fax 780.488.0538

Can I be a Successful Suzuki Parent Even if I Don't Play the Piano?

Help, I'm a Suzuki parent with no background in piano! Does this sound like you? Well as a parent who was once a piano student enrolled in Suzuki and later Royal Conservatory, I have reached some conclusions about this idea. There are certainly some benefits of having a piano background, but it is definitely not a necessity.

As the Suzuki approach implies – music is like a spoken language and can be learned by any child. From personal experience, as a Chinese person I grew up taking French immersion, despite the fact that my parents spoke no French at all. By Grade 6, my French was of sufficient quality to participate on Radio Canada. Currently, my daughter attends a Mandarin bilingual school and speaks very well (so I'm told) despite the fact that her mother and I do not speak the language. Music is no different. It can be learned by kids even if their parents don't play.

While there are certainly advantages to having a piano background - playing the song for your child, being able to easily focus in on specific issues, pointing out nuances in the music, having a general understanding of repetitive practice methodology - these advantages are moot if the Suzuki methodology is followed. Regular playing of the CD means you and your child can easily learn the notes and tune on the piano; taking good lesson notes will give you a sense of what needs to be worked on; using creative home-practice games and activities will lessen the chore of repetitive practice. Your teacher will also have an important role in pointing out nuances in piano playing. My daughter's teacher is Alla Rekhson. All of Alla's students play beautifully as she focuses not just on the right notes, but more importantly, on "the quality of sound" and development of good tone - a key emphasis of the Suzuki approach.

There are potential disadvantages to having a piano background, as well. These include heightened expectations and frustration along the lines of "If I did it as a child, you can do it too", and worst of all, defaulting to old-school piano learning styles (i.e. "the play and practice or else!" methodology which still occurs on occasion in many households today – mine included!). I must admit, I have found it challenging at times to implement the Suzuki approach as my piano education experience has been closer to the latter method.

As a young piano student, my first experience was through Suzuki. I don't remember too much about the methodology, but I do remember being able to play and enjoy relatively advanced pieces for my age, and I continue to appreciate and play music on a regular basis to this day; a valued gift I credit to the Suzuki method.

So in summary, you don't need to have a piano background to ensure your child is able to play and enjoy piano music. The Suzuki approach will make up for any shortcomings you (or I) may have as long as you follow it.

Ernest Li

Parents of Beginner Students: For an introduction to the Suzuki approach and an orientation to successful practicing at home, plan to attend our next Parent Class on Saturday, April 27th at Suzuki Charter School. The class runs from 9 AM to noon. RSVP through your teacher.

DATE CHANGES: Spring Concert Schedule

In order to secure space at Convocation Hall, some of the dates for the following events have been changed. Please adjust your spring calendars for the following events.

May 26, 2013 Group Concert, Suzuki Charter School

June 2, 2013 Graduation, Multart Hall

June 9 & 16, 2013 Summer Recitals, Convocation Hall

Experimentation/Noodling/Composing at the Piano

Children often enjoy seeing what sounds they can create on the piano: please let them, as long as it does not become too loud or unpleasant. Part of playing the piano is enjoying its sound. Noodling can lead to composing a piece. However, students still need to have dedicated practice time for their assignment. For some students, it would be best to separate experimenting time from practice time; for others, it would be best to have the experimenting first; or last. You can experiment to see what works for your family!

Tim Eckert

There's an App for That!

This spring, try something new to help with practising. Our teachers continue to discover great apps that just might help kids improve their skills and still have a little fun, too. Search for these apps for your iPad, mobile phone or other device.

Ken Zeller recommends **Tempo Slow Mo**, a free Apple iOS app that allows you to play the Suzuki recordings at a slower speed. Also, try an iTunes app called **Music Tools**. It covers all the musical terminology and symbols students encounter in our written scores.

Rhonda McEachen suggests **Music Tones** and **Piano Flash**, two game apps that utilize your child's ear training to enhance their note reading.

April 2013 Graduations

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

Volume 1

Marlon Beakhouse
Chloe Giesbrecht
Darby Haysom
Anna Heintzman
Jonathan Li
Faith Los
Tess Rose
Parker Schenk

Volume 2

Erika Dyck
Lauren Hanson
Timothy Lu
Ping Nixon-Hermansen

Volume 3

Jennifer Li

Volume 4

Madeline Lietz

Volume 5

Jacob Paetsch
Vivian Wong

Volume 6

Yoyo Siu

2013/14 Registration Packages

Watch for the 2013/14 registration packages to arrive in your teacher's studio in late April. Within the package, you'll find registration information and forms for selecting volunteer options and group class preferences. This year, tuition fees payable to teachers remain unchanged.

The registration deadline for returning families is May 15, 2013. *Please note that due to the high demand for lessons with in our program, parents who do not submit forms and payment by this date cannot be guaranteed a lesson slot. In order to guarantee your place in your teacher's studio, you must register by May 15th, 2013.*