



Twinkling The Ivories

April 2015

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The Importance of Listening

One of the most interesting aspects of the Suzuki method is the importance placed upon listening. I was intrigued when I learned of Dr. Suzuki's comparison between our ability to learn a language and to learn to play an instrument. It resonated with me, because music is essentially another language.

I thought about my own experience growing up as a bilingual child, speaking English and Spanish. I couldn't tell you which I technically learned first – both were always present. There was a period, during my teenage years, where I was very shy to speak Spanish, and did not do so unless I absolutely had to. However, many years later, here I am, fully and confidently bilingual. Why did I not lose it?

The real answer came to me after working with my children in the Suzuki method and observing how much listening influenced their progress. I was blown away when their teacher would introduce a new piece and they would excitedly exclaim, "I know that one", and would proceed to clumsily fumble through it. Although these first attempts were not perfect, it was very clear that they really did have it mentally, and the next steps of repetition and practice would solidify it. I also have witnessed the positive impact of active listening. Those moments where the correct notes are in place and the body positioning is fine, and all that was missing was listening to key parts in the song and just closing our eyes and listening to the tone. Taking the time to actively listen is what we needed to reach the anticipated result.

I realized early that speaking Spanish was a gift that I didn't want to lose. Although I was shy to speak it during those years, I actively listened to Spanish music, and I believe it was the music that kept the language alive for me. The foundation that was established through listening at a young age, allowed me as an adult to enhance my Spanish to a level where I was able to use it as a key asset in my career. I often borrow from the Suzuki method to teach my children Spanish, and the French and Arabic from their Father's heritage. I don't fret that they are not fluent, because as long as they are actively listening, the opportunity will always be alive.

Carolina Calderon

Get Ready! Group Concerts on Sunday May 3rd at SCS

1:00 PM – Group Classes of Alla, Ken, Rhonda, Melanie, and Gail

3:15 PM – Group Classes of Ruth, Nancy, Tim, Tess, and Eleanor

Please arrive early so students can find their groups. Dress is casual.

In Conversation with ESPS Alumni: Taina Lorenz

My name is Taina Lorenz and I am a Suzuki student. My parents had noticed that from the time I was very young, I had a strong response to music; I was constantly singing and dancing. Unfortunately, I was a terrible klutz and dancing was a hazard to me and others, so at age 5, my parents enrolled me in piano lessons.

My piano teacher was Nancy Thornhill. I studied with her on Monday nights until I was eighteen. She was, and still remains, one of the most important influences in my musical career. She pushed me to be excellent and critical of my own playing, and gave solid practice strategies that ensured I improved from week to week. Mrs. Thornhill was interested in me as a person, as well as a musician, and truly made me feel like I mattered to her and that I had something to offer the world. One of the coolest things about Mrs. Thornhill was that she also played trombone. I thought this was really awesome; it meant that people could be great musicians on more than one instrument.

My parents strongly supported music of all forms, and were very cognizant of the time and structure needed to develop musical skill. Practice time was sacred in our house. Each night, after supper, was piano practice time. As per the Suzuki tradition, parents are encouraged to participate in the lessons and practice of their children. My father was my supervisor, and my mother supervised my brother. My parents ensured that the strategies and plans set out in the week's lesson were followed exactly. My father sat with me during practice time until I was able to practice on my own, at which point he listened from the adjoining room. I genuinely enjoyed practice, although it did take me many years to develop the focus necessary to really excel. Of course, as with any teenager, there were days when I simply didn't want to practice. Those days generally resulted in rows between my father and I. Once, on a particularly challenging night, my father gave me the ultimatum of "If you don't want to practice piano any more, fine. [He] will take [the piano] away and sell it." He was not angry, just matter of fact. I felt like I had the breath knocked out of me! Take away my piano? No way. I couldn't let that happen. The result? I practiced harder and longer than ever, and I began to understand how much music was a part of my being.

As per the Suzuki Method, after practice time, the "endless tape" was played. This fantastic tool had the recordings of the pieces we were learning and was used to reinforce the technical aspects of our practice. Once we had learned a piece, the tape was re-recorded with the new repertoire, and the cycle, literally, continued. That tape played in my tape recorder, every night, for thirteen years. The aural training provided by the endless tape has translated into very acute listening skills that I employ consistently in my job as a conductor and music educator. Interestingly, I do find that I still love to listen to music, one piece at a time, over and over, to really get into the nuances of the music and to understand the story it tells.

One of the best things about Suzuki Piano was the training in musicality as well as technique. This allowed me to really tap my emotions and express them through the piano. As such, my favourite pieces were the ones where I could be dramatic. Mrs. Thornhill had me play "Wild Rider" (R. Schumann) on the lid of the piano, to really get into the rhythm and the pulse of the

piece; "Sonata K331" (Mozart) was such a variety of variations and styles that thrill me to this day; "Minuet" (Paderewski) taught me Romantic showmanship and flare and the importance of timing in a piece; and my absolute favourite, "By the Limpid Stream" (Burgmuller), a piece all about simplicity and effortless flow. Mrs. Thornhill also played duets with me, which was extremely fun, and helped to instill the attitude that music was something to enjoy and share with others.

Continued, page 3



Nancy Thornhill and Taina Lorenz- photo provided by Taina Lorenz

In Conversation with Taina Lorenz, continued

In high school, I realized that I was a "Band Geek" and revelled in the ensemble environment, and the sounds of wind ensemble and concert band. Once I entered University, I switched my focus from piano to trumpet performance, and then to music education. As a music educator and trumpeter, the skills and attitudes I learned during those years of piano lessons were put to use every day - everything from how to practice, how to listen, how to perform, and how to communicate with my students. I have been teaching band in junior high and high schools since 1997. Partway through my teaching career, I returned to school for my Master of Music in Wind Conducting at the University of Alberta so I could develop myself both as an educator and as a professional musician.

The musical skills and overall facility on the piano, as well as the discipline of practice and criticism have become even more important in my work as a conductor and professional musician. Now, I am Music Director and Conductor for the Cosmopolitan Music Society, a large community music organization in Edmonton that has five bands ranging from beginner to semi-professional and a large mixed chorus. I am living my dream of making music with people.

Recently I have come back into contact with Mrs. Thornhill through the band world. One of the first things that I did when I saw her was thank her for teaching me piano. Music lessons and the Suzuki approach inspired me to be a musician and educator. Through piano lessons, I learned the skills and attitudes that I use every day as part of my job. Without the training offered by the Suzuki Method, my path would have been very different.

Taina Lorenz, Suzuki student 1980-1993

As per the Suzuki Method, after one's practice time, the "endless tape" was played.

This fantastic tool had the recordings of the pieces we were learning at the time and was used to reinforce the technical aspects of our practice. Once we had learned a piece, the tape was re-recorded with the new repertoire, and the cycle, literally, continued. That tape played in my tape recorder, every night, for thirteen years. The aural training provided by the endless tape has translated into very acute listening skills that I employ consistently in my job as a conductor and music educator. Interestingly, I do find that I still love to listen to music, one piece at a time, over and over, to really get into the nuances of the music and to understand the story it tells.

ESPS Spring Calendar

April 29, 2015 *ESPS General Meeting at Suzuki Charter School – Parent Members Welcome!*

May 3, 2015 *Groups Concert at Suzuki Charter School*

1:00 – Groups of Alla, Ken, Rhonda, Melanie, and Gail

3:15 – Groups of Ruth, Nancy, Tim, Tess, Eleanor

May 29, 2015 *Recital of Joyce Sipsas at Suzuki Charter School*

June 7, 2015 *Recitals at PCL Hall, Alberta College*

1:15 – Students of Gail Olmstead and Regine Maier

2:30 – Students of Rhonda McEachen and Melanie Bodnar

June 7, 2015 *Recitals at Convocation Hall*

12:30 – Students of Tim Eckert

2:00 – Students of Ken Zeller

3:15 – Students of Nancy Thornhill

4:45 – Students of Ruth Johnson

June 14, 2015 *Recitals at Convocation Hall*

1:45 – Students of Eleanor Tsui

3:00 – Students of Tess Brown

June 21, 2015 *Graduation Ceremony at Muttart Hall*

Start Planning Your Summer Institute Adventure! Brandon, Manitoba

It's not too early to plan your summer institute adventure! Every summer, Suzuki communities around North America offer Summer Institutes. These institutes are special camps that provide a musical experience for families with children who are studying piano or other instruments. Institutes feature activities for students, parents and teachers in one-week sessions throughout the summer. Families attend the institute together and participate in a wide range of musical and enrichment activities.

This year, consider attending a summer institute in Brandon, Manitoba. Held July 19-24, 2015, the **Brandon Suzuki Summer Institute** will offer programming for students in piano, violin, viola, and cello. The student program will feature master classes, technique class, group classes, yoga, and Orff based classes. Add some social activities and recitals, and it will be a busy and exciting week!

A complete listing of Suzuki Summer Institutes throughout North America (for all instruments) can be found at www.suzukiassociation.org/events/institutes/.

One ESPS Student's Experience at the 2014 Calgary Summer Institute

The Calgary Institute was a fun experience for me. I enjoyed it because it gave me the opportunity to learn new things that your teacher doesn't teach you. For example I got to participate in a class where I learned how to play the guitar. I think that learning a new instrument will help kids to do better in junior high and high school band programs. I also got to participate in an enrichment class where I got to move to the music. I think that would help kids get a better understanding of the music.

I would encourage people to go to an institute because you get to be more involved with music. I would enjoy it if there was an institute every year.

Mae MacDonald

Food for Thought...

"When I teach, there is always an invisible sign hanging over the student. Written on this imaginary sign is the question "What can I do next that will help the most? Parents who practice with their children every day, who are "home teachers," will benefit from expanding the question to "What can I do next that will help the most, given that I'm the parent, the one person in the world my child is counting on for love and support?"

Ed Sprunger, *Helping Parents Practice: Ideas for Making it Easier*,
page 85-86

April 2015 Graduations

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

Volume 1

Emma Compri
Wesley Deng
Elise Ehlers
Hershey Fiedacan
Kasper Ganam
Daniel Hu
Jaida Nowazek
Ella Schaloske
Sydnie Zapesocki

Volume 2

Amber Chen
Tristan Tsang
Mataia Wong

Volume 3

Erika Dyck
Kianna Flores
Ping Nixon-Hermansen
Weiran Sun

Volume 4

Isaac Chua
Hannah Liu
Ksenia Pankratyeva
Jackson Zhou

Volume 5

David Gutenberg
Luka Morita

*"Music exists for the purpose
of growing an admirable
heart."*

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki