



Twinkling The Ivories

June 2015

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Staying in Shape – Keeping Up With Practice over the Summer

The summer months have a lot to offer our kids. A whole new kind of busy-ness awaits with summer camps, family trips, play dates, and super summer fun activities. Finding time to maintain their repertoire can be daunting let alone attempting to forge ahead with new pieces especially when even a couple weeks without practice can really set things back and create frustration the next time they pick up their instrument.

I have two kids in the program so far, both of whom are still little and learning the habits and routines of how to practice, proper posture, and developing the stamina needed to play or practice effectively. If we wanted practice to remain fun and not create unnecessary frustration or tears in the fall we had to come up with a plan.

Here is what worked for our family over the summer to stay in shape for the fall. First, we had to remember that its summer break, break being the key word, so we had to keep practice a positive thing. We decided on a few activities that support music and academic skills like reading, writing, practice, and finally an activity to teach and encourage family dynamics. Each activity could easily be done in under half an hour. Some could be brought on family trips, like keeping a journal, and others could wait until we got home. We then agreed that these would be up to our kids to complete of their own accord. To help facilitate we set up a time each day to create routine and good habits but ultimately if they said they would rather play outside it was up to them. Every morning, when we were home we would set up the timer and tell them that this was the time to get things done.

No, we do not have angel children; there is more to the story. The catch was that each completed task would postpone bedtime by half an hour. For our kids getting to stay up for an additional two hours is a big deal. This was free time too. We spent time as a family doing whatever they wanted to do in that time. The other catch was that their activities had to be up to a certain standard and also had to fit within the time limit. That way they didn't take over the whole day. The first week we had to set the tone so that expectations were clear. Finally, while they were taking care of their responsibilities, the Suzuki CD was playing in the background to reinforce their learning. For our family this plan kept things simple and relatively fun, leaving lots of room to build good memories and make the most of the sunshine.

Andrew Dueck

ESPS Annual General Meeting

Ever wondered what role ESPS plays and how it benefits your family? Let us introduce you to ESPS at our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, September 30th at 7:30 p.m. at Suzuki Charter School.

We have exciting plans for ESPS and would love your help. This year, we are seeking volunteers to serve on our Board of Directors. Whether you are a beginner parent with ESPS or have been involved for many years, your perspective is valuable, and we would welcome your participation!

For more information about joining our Board of Directors, please speak to Administrator Kim Green at 780.488.0548.

In Conversation with ESPS Alumni: The Christensen Family

On the occasion of ESPS's 40th Anniversary, teacher Melanie Bodnar decided to interview her three siblings, all of whom studied Suzuki piano from preschool – high school but didn't choose music (or the arts) as a career. She wanted to find out what they consider to be life-long benefits of a Suzuki education.

Peter Christensen is an oil and gas engineer currently working in North Africa for a Europe-based oil and gas drilling company. **Nathan Christensen** holds a degree in computer engineering with a focus in biomedical engineering and is employed in Calgary with a large international oil and gas service company. **Naomi Christensen** has a master's degree in political science and is a policy analyst for a Western Canadian think tank based in Calgary. All are in their third decade of life.

From this vantage point, what are some benefits you see to kids learning to play an instrument?

Peter: Memory development, building confidence from being able to develop a skill that not many people have, appreciation of the value of practice and the benefits that come from practicing (which can apply to anything) and understanding that relationship (ie: the more you practice the better you get).

Nathan: Any skill can carry over to other aspects of your life. Learning an instrument can boost self-esteem.

Naomi: Kids who learn an instrument at a young age will always be able to pick it up later on (as an adult) much more easily than someone learning only as an adult. Taking lessons as a child gives them the option of being musically active at any point throughout their life if they choose to be. Practicing an instrument everyday teaches a good habit of being able to commit to something and stick to it.

What are some skills you learned through Suzuki Piano other than playing the piano?

Peter: Memory development; fine motor skill development (dexterity); the ability to look at a task/job/challenge or anything for that matter and know that if you apply yourself, practice, and strive to be better it can be accomplished; the ability to appreciate music, especially good music and understand the time, effort, sacrifice and dedication that goes into it.

Nathan: Memory and focus

Naomi: Memory development, perseverance, discipline

Have any of these skills helped you in your adult life/career? How?

Peter: All of them. They allow me to address any problem/new task and know that if I apply myself I can accomplish the desired result. My excellent memory helped me to be successful in school and at university. They have also given me the edge in my job where many numbers and figures need to be used. My ability to correctly recall numbers saves time, impresses management and has progressed my career at a faster than average rate.

Nathan: They are basic skills necessary to succeed in an academic or professional environment.

Naomi: As an adult, being able to play the piano and playing for fun has been a great stress relieving activity. Knowing musical material and performing in front of many different types of audiences growing up has greatly reduced my "stage fright" of making presentations and public speaking as an adult.

Would you encourage parents to invest in a musical education for their children?

Peter: 100%. It is an excellent investment.

Nathan: Yes.

Naomi: Yes. It is a great social activity and enables kids to meet friends with similar interests through music recitals, competitions, etc. Being able to play a musical instrument is also a talent people recognize as being an accomplishment, building confidence in a child (or even adult) that can play for others.



The Christensen kids in their Suzuki piano t-shirts – 1989. Photo by Eileen Christensen

In Conversation with ESPS Alumni: Tess Brown

It is amazing how many of my students over the years are still involved in music in some way.

I run into their moms at the grocery store and they tell me their kids still play the piano. I have taught a concert promoter, a Celtic harpist, several music teachers and lots of band musicians. I think they had fun in their early years.

It was 1965. I was a Bachelor of Music student at the University of Alberta, majoring in Piano Performance. Violin was my second study and my lessons were with Thomas Rolston. His studio was behind Convocation Hall, where the green room is now. One day I saw a bunch of little people walking around on the stage with their tiny violins. Some of them were made of cardboard and sometimes they even dropped them! I had no idea what these little people with their tiny violins were doing.

I soon learned that Thomas Rolston had travelled to Japan to learn about the Suzuki approach and had brought two Japanese teachers back to Edmonton to teach the Suzuki Method. The Society for Talent Education was born! All of Thomas Rolston's students played in his Chamber orchestra along with anyone else he could recruit, such as the Japanese teachers, Yoko Oike and Yasuko Tanaka.

In 1975 a certain Lutheran minister was transferred to Edmonton from California and his piano teacher wife, Clarice Moellering, "hung out her shingle" and began teaching Suzuki Piano in Edmonton. She was responsible for the birth of the Edmonton Suzuki Piano School. Clarice's son was studying Suzuki violin with Yasuko Tanaka and it was through Yasuko that I was introduced to Clarice in 1977. She recruited me to teach Suzuki piano and shortly thereafter she recruited Ruth Johnson and Nancy Thornhill.

Meeting Clarice was such a turning point in my life. I had been teaching piano by the traditional method for seven years and was really not enjoying it very much. I was thinking of a career change. Most of the students were dropped off at their lessons and it seemed like they did not open their piano books between lessons. That completely turned around for me when I began using the Suzuki approach. I loved having the parents at the lessons, taking notes and asking questions and then practicing with their children at home. The best part was they listened to cassette recordings so they already knew how the music sounded before they even tried to play it. Little did I know how rewarding it could be to teach piano.

ESPS celebrates its 40th Anniversary this year, and I have been teaching Suzuki for almost four decades. It is amazing how many of my students over the years are still involved in music in some way. I run into their moms at the grocery store and they tell me their kids still play the piano. I have taught a concert promoter, a Celtic harpist, several music teachers and lots of band

members. I think they had fun in their early years. They could play by ear right away but they also learned how to read music so they ended up with the best of both worlds. I am very grateful to be living in Edmonton where the Suzuki Method has flourished.

Tess Brown

2015/2016 ESPS Calendar

- September 30, 2015** *ESPS AGM at Suzuki Charter School*
- October 24 & 25, 2015** *Fall Workshop at Suzuki Charter School*
- November 8, 2015** *Graduation Ceremony at Muttart Hall*
- December 6, 2015** *ESPS 40th Anniversary Concert*
- January 17, 2016** *ESPS at the ESO Event*
- January 31, 2016** *Graduation Ceremony at Muttart Hall*
- April 9, 2016** *Spring Festival at Suzuki Charter School*
- April 10, 2016** *Graduation Ceremony at PCL Hall*
- May 1, 2016** *Group Concert at Suzuki Charter School*
- June 4,5,11, & 12, 2016** *Spring Recitals at Convocation Hall*
- June 19, 2016** *Graduation Ceremony at Muttart Hall*

Thank You City of
Edmonton!

Edmonton Suzuki Piano School gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Edmonton through the Community Investment Operating Grant Program.

June 2015 Graduations

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

Volume 1

Morgan Burgess
Petra Dueck
Rhett Giesbrecht
Josiah Li
Marshall Mayzel
Julia Parker
Erika Starcevic

Volume 2

Liam Cowie
Lauren Huang
Loel Jans
Eric Mierzewski
Tessa Parker
Jacob Xue

Volume 3

Marlon Beakhouse
Clara Chen
Meredith Graham
Ruby MacMillan
Finnegan Taylor
Noah Thomas
Micah Truong
Elise VandenBorn
Muskaan Visram

Volume 4

Julianna Graham
James Gray

Volume 5

Matthew Lee
Dariush Khani-Hanjani

Volume 6

Jacob Paetsch

"Don't hurry don't rest. Without stopping, without haste, carefully taking one step at a time will surely get you there"

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki

Thank You Excellent ESPS Volunteers!

As we wrap up another harmonious year, we offer our gratitude to all of the ESPS parent volunteers who offered their time and energy to make the year successful. Events like the Fall Workshop, Spring Festival and our Group Concerts require a lot of people power – and your part in that is appreciated!

And for those of you who volunteered at our recent casino, we offer our many thanks, too. It is not easy to work a long shift, often late into the night, and we appreciate your commitment. The casino is our most important fundraiser, and the money raised helps to fund our programming. This year, our casino fundraiser netted ESPS about \$81,000, which will be spent on some of the costs associated with group classes, teacher training and facility rentals over the next two years.

Finally, we offer a special thank you to the ESPS Board of Directors, who has given our society a bright new vision and focus for the future.

Add a Musical Adventure to Your Summer!

Edmonton's summer festivals offer an incredible opportunity to experience a variety of musical genres. Share your favourites with your kids as you enjoy summertime in Edmonton!

Edmonton Chamber Music Festival

June 18-21, 2015

Edmonton International Jazz Festival

June 19-28, 2015

K-Days

July 17-26, 2015

Blueberry Bluegrass and Country Music Festival

July 31 – August 2, 2015

Heritage Festival

August 1-3, 2015

Edmonton Folk Music Festival

August 6-9, 2015

Cariwest – Edmonton Caribbean Arts Festival

August 7-9, 2015

Edmonton Blues Festival

August 21-23, 2015

Symphony under the Sky Festival

August 28-30, 2015

Kaleido Family Arts Festival

September 11-13, 2015

For more fun and adventure, check out these websites for great activities:

www.festivalseekers.com/edmontonfestivals

www.travelalberta.com/festivals