



# Twinkling The Ivories

September 2015

## Welcome (Back) to Edmonton Suzuki Piano School!

Edmonton Suzuki Piano School provides musical development to students, parents and teachers, following the Suzuki Method. We seek to create a learning community, which embraces excellence and nurtures the human spirit. Like Dr. Suzuki, we believe in the Suzuki triangle, and that the stronger the collaboration between students, parent and teacher, the stronger the impact of the approach.

Take a look at some of the benefits ESPS provides for the members of our Suzuki Triangle:

- ESPS provides resources and workshops for families and teachers, including Suzuki books and CDs, our family practice binder and tote, periodic parent talks and other sessions, and a newsletter and website full of ideas and practice tips.
- ESPS offers a parent orientation class for beginning parents, designed to provide information about the Suzuki Method, tips for successful practicing, and introduction to some of the songs in book one.
- ESPS offers fun and motivating group music class experiences that provide pianists with a chance to build community, learn music theory, and perform with others at our annual group concert.
- ESPS offers interesting and inspiring events like our Fall Workshop and Spring Festival where guest teachers and clinicians are invited to Edmonton to offer master classes for our students and teachers.
- ESPS celebrates the success of our students and teachers by providing performance opportunities like the Honours Concert, recitals, and at our graduation concerts.
- ESPS provides our qualified and trained teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities both here in Edmonton and throughout North America.
- ESPS provides our members with the strength of a parent society. The leaders in our society meet monthly to share ideas, do big-picture thinking, and strategize about what ESPS can do to continually support its students, parents and teachers. There is strength in numbers.

Thank you for being a part of our community of students, teachers, and parents! We appreciate your commitment to daily practice, attendance at our great group classes and participation in events like our Fall Workshop and the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert. We welcome you to a new year!

*"When love is deep, much can be accomplished"* - Dr. Shinichi Suzuki

***Start the year off right and fill your practice binder with fresh note-taking pages and repetition or goal charts.***



***Find all kinds of practice pages at our website.***

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Kim Green

### Contact ESPS

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# ESPS Presents: A Very Special 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert

Sunday December 6, 2015  
2:30 PM

Join ESPS in celebrating our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a unique concert featuring very special performances by ESPS faculty, family members, alumni, and some interesting duos and groups that will engage and inspire!

A limited number of tickets will be available for \$5 each and will be available for purchase later in the fall. Prizes and a reception to follow the concert will round out an afternoon celebrating 40 years of Edmonton Suzuki Piano School!

## Get Ready for These Upcoming ESPS Events

2015/2016 promises to be another great year for ESPS as we look forward to new events and the return of some family favourites! Read on for more details about what's in store this autumn:

### Parent Orientation Class

Saturday September 19, 2015 from 9-12 at Suzuki Charter School

Families who are new to our program are required to attend our Parent Class. This orientation workshop provides information about the Suzuki approach, tips for successful practicing, an introduction to some of the first songs in Book One, and answers to any questions that may have come up as you begin your journey as a Suzuki parent. The class is also open to families looking for a refresher class. *Note: Parents who attended the Parent Class in the spring do not need to attend this workshop.*

### Annual General Meeting and Meet & Greet Idea Swap

Wednesday September 30, 2015 at Suzuki Charter School

We invite you to attend our AGM and Parent Idea Swap on September 30, 2015. In addition to reporting on our year and presenting our financial statements, we'll be holding elections for membership on our Board of Directors. We're looking for several new parent representatives who are keen to help shape the future direction of Edmonton Suzuki Piano School. It isn't necessary to have had previous Board experience, and whether you have been an ESPS member for one year or ten, your perspective is valuable! Please consider getting involved with the Board of Directors. For more details about getting involved with the Board, speak to Kim Green at 780.488.0548.

Following the AGM, members will share stories, ideas and tips based on our experiences as Suzuki piano parents over coffee and refreshments - a great opportunity for new parents to gather ideas!

### Fall Workshop

October 24 & 25, 2015 at Suzuki Charter School

Edmonton's biggest Suzuki piano event offers ESPS students master classes with guest teachers, an enrichment class featuring instructors from the Alberta chapter of Carl Orff Canada, a Parent Session with Nena LaMarre, and student performances at an Honours Concert. This value packed program is available to ESPS members for a low registration fee of only \$30 per student! Watch for registration information and forms at your teacher's studio. Registration deadline is September 30, 2015.



Moments from our **2015 Group Concert**: Gail Olmstead and some "Cool Cats" (above), Alla's group performs **The Celebration March** (below left), and Ken Zeller accompanies his group on the accordion as they perform **The Memory Waltz**



## Deliberate Practice: Reflections from A Parent

My son started his piano lessons in September 2014, so this is the first year of my journey as a Suzuki parent. Before that, I had attended group lessons with him in Music for Young Children (MYC) for a year. I have never played a musical instrument in my life and I learned how to read notes from the MYC group lessons. My ignorance in music worried me but it also led me to focus more on the general aspect of active learning process, not musical results per se.

The biggest question I had was how daily practices should be. Since I didn't have firsthand experience myself, I tried to get some insights from books. The first one I thought of was Geoff Colvin's bestselling book "Talent Is Overrated" that I had read a few years ago. The book was meant for the business world but the key insight of "deliberate practice" (DP) was derived from music and sports practices. The key elements of deliberate practice helped me to check whether I was doing the right thing and to understand the challenge my son was facing.

The first attribute of deliberate practice is that *it's designed specifically to improve performance*. I immediately checked it. Our teacher Eleanor always gave us "sharply defined elements" to practice. And She explained in a way that my son at seven could understand and could achieve with some effort.

The second attribute is that *it can be repeated a lot*. Again, it was immediately checked. Eleanor's assignments were focused. For example, we could easily practice a specific measure with a specific technique for 20 times within 5 minutes.

The third attribute is that *feedback on results is continuously available*. Again, check. I tried my best taking notes during lessons, so I could provide feedback immediately in practice. We also received feedback from Eleanor during each lesson for previous assignments.

The fourth attribute is that *it's highly demanding mentally*. In the first few months, before we start practicing a particular assignment I asked my son to tell me what exactly the intention was, and asked him to hold that thought for that particular assignment. He had to be aware of the technique he intended to practice the whole time. It was challenging. We practiced 40 minutes for most of the days. I would end a practice early if my son started to constantly make mistakes that he wouldn't make if he weren't too tired.

The last attribute of DP is that sometimes *it's not much fun*. To my son, repeating the same thing many times was not always fun. I asked him why it was fun to repeat the finger motion again and again playing Angry Birds but not so practicing piano. He said that hitting the pigs and making them scream was fun. I let him shoot my fingers with his finger gun each time he practiced a particular thing and I made piggy noises. He found it amusing. So I tried and I will keep trying. But as Geoff Colvin stated "deliberate practice is not inherently enjoyable" and it is OK. It is OK that he does not like practicing very slowly to nail the details when he can play faster (but barely). It is OK that he sometimes has an attitude and finds excuses to procrastinate. There is nothing offensive about it. It is natural. It is a perfect chance for parents to practice gentle firmness with love, patience, empathy, respect, and strategy.

Li Zhou



Moments from our 2015 Group Concert: Tess' group shakes it up to **Hernando's Hideaway** (top), and Alla's group dress the part for **The Russian Waltz**.

Photo credit: Barbara Heintzman,  
Photography by Barbara

## Keeping It Positive: How I Survived My First Year as a Suzuki Parent

Being new parents to Edmonton Suzuki Piano School with our 4 year old daughter presented many joys and challenges this year. After taking piano lessons for 10 years in my childhood, I was definitely excited and I looked forward to seeing my daughter learn music and play the piano. The enthusiastic and fun ways in which Tim, our piano teacher, would engage my daughter and watching her have so much fun and enjoyment at her lessons gave me so much hope that practicing at home would be as much, if not more, fun at home.

Boy was I in for a shock... at least at the beginning. At home once I said "Time to practice!", or "piano time", I would see the enthusiasm in my daughter's face disappear. There would be resistance, some tears and lots of arguing from both sides as I tried to get her to do the repetitions that she needed to work on. It got to the point where she didn't like playing the piano at all.

At one of her lessons, Tim noticed some terminology I was using and the negative effect it was having on my daughter even in her lessons. He encouraged me to stop using words like "wrong" and "no." Instead he suggested phrases like "try again" and "you're close;" and other encouraging words. At the same time, we started including more and more games to help with the repetitions.

Another aspect that really helped with practice was breaking up the amount of time we practiced. We tried practicing in 10 minute blocks three times a day rather than sitting at the piano for 30 minutes at a time. This has been much more effective and enjoyable for our family.

Lastly what has really been great was something that happened just by chance. Our piano is in the same room as the children's play area, and one day I left the cover to the piano keys up by accident. Well, my daughter just went in and started playing and practicing her songs on her own. One Sunday morning she woke up before the rest of the family and we were woken up by some wonderful "Twinkle" variations! Lately, we have enjoyed seeing her sit her brother down in front of the piano and play songs for him. She also tries to teach him rhythmic variations by clapping them and having him repeat to her (ta, ta, ti, ti, ta).

After one year in, the biggest piece of advice I can give to new parents is try your best to keep practices at home positive (through your choice of words), fun (with lots fun games and variations), and really informal so children remember that this is something that they want to do, not have to do.

Anil Maharaj

### 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 40<sup>th</sup> 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*

## Welcome to Teacher Heather Hindman

This fall, we are pleased to welcome our newest teacher, Heather Hindman to Edmonton Suzuki Piano School.

Heather is a pianist, teacher and award-winning Canadian composer. She holds a Master of Music degree from McGill University and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Alberta, and also studied Jazz Piano at Grant MacEwan. Heather is a member of the Canadian and Alberta music teachers associations and the Canadian League of Composers. She has a special interest in contemporary and Canadian music and has served on the board of advisors for New Music Edmonton.

Heather currently maintains a busy studio of 45 students in south Edmonton (Lendrum area), and has been teaching traditional piano for over 20 years. She is excited to have recently joined the Suzuki community and has completed Book 1 training at the Calgary Suzuki institute. When not teaching or composing, Heather enjoys walking with her dog, swimming, cooking and practicing yoga.