



# Twinkling The Ivories

April 2016

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## It's All Fun and Games at Practice Time!

I've struggled to get my daughter to practice piano since we started Suzuki one year ago. I'm not a great role model when it comes to practicing; I'd rather be playing a game than sitting at the piano. It's when I finally realized that we could do both that things changed for us. In an effort to make practicing more fun I decided to try turning practices into a game. The technical term, Gamification, is gaining momentum in educational institutions around the world – recognizing that children have learned through play for thousands of years.

Gamification is the application of typical elements of game playing (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play, etc.) to other areas of activity to encourage engagement. I got the idea from an online forum when I googled "getting Suzuki children to practice" when I was feeling particularly challenged.

Our Suzuki teacher, Regine, is excellent at suggesting small exercises to enhance finger strength and dexterity. But, getting my daughter to actually do the exercises and understand the point of them is a challenge. So, with the guidance of my online research, backed with the ideas our teacher suggests to enhance tone, strength and technique, I copied a game board that incorporated small yet meaningful activities that are just short enough to maintain her attention but combined result in a 45 minute lesson. We went from 30-second practices (playing one song and then she was done) to 15 minutes of laughter and fun, sometimes twice a day.

My game board incorporates the exercises Regine suggests and each game board square is one exercise. Each game square is loaded with an incentive (carrot slices, blueberries, and sometimes, popcorn) and my daughter gets to decide how many incentives she wants – which is always more than I would expect, in fact.

She decides which square she wants to start at and I read her the square. She eats the snack and then completes the task to her satisfaction, and mine, and then continues on. Sometimes we complete a square three or four times until it's done with her best ability and we celebrate each attempt. As her abilities progress, the game board gets updated, incorporating more challenging exercises. It's so much fun for both her and me. She gets a sense of accomplishment by seeing how many squares she's completed, I gain confidence as a Suzuki parent when I see our work is paying off, we spend quality time together learning about each other's strengths and motivations and we're closer to being ready for each lesson by accomplishing what we've been asked to practice.

Some examples of game board squares include:

- Play one song with both hands
- Grab the key 10 times with finger 5, left hand
- Play one song with dynamics – forte & piano
- "Walk" with fingers 2&3, right hand
- Play one song while singing all of the words
- Play E-F-G connected, legato

***When my husband recently commented "Good practicing," my daughter corrected him by saying "We weren't practicing, Daddy. We were playing piano games."***

Amy Roy Gratton

## Congratulations to ESPS' Latest Book 7 Graduates!

*On May 29<sup>th</sup>, Book 7 students Michaelene Poworoznik and Selma Hammad will hold a special recital to celebrate their completion of the Suzuki repertoire and the ESPS program. Michaelene and Selma, both students of Alla Rekhson, will perform works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Stravinsky, Bach, Bartok and more.*

*The concert will take place on Sunday May 29<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM at Muttart Hall, and ESPS members are invited to come enjoy these very special performances!*

Selma Hammad

Piano has been a part of my life since age four, and I'm so thankful that I was given a strong music foundation to build upon throughout the years. I'd like to thank the Edmonton Suzuki Piano School for its many performance opportunities, and my wonderful mother Regine Maier, who consistently insured efficient practice habits and believes in my capabilities. Most of all, I would have never arrived where I am now if it weren't for my persistent and patient teacher Alla Rekhson. Aside from piano, I am also a passionate dancer in various disciplines, as well as a singer. Since grade seven, I have been involved in band, playing the trumpet, and exploring other genres of music. All these art forms have definitely benefitted my endeavors as a pianist and vice versa.

Currently, I am a grade eleven student at Harry Ainlay High School, in the French Immersion and partial IB programs. Thus, weekdays are usually filled with homework and studying, however playing the piano has always been an activity which helps acquire a broader perspective of life. The realm of music is filled with outstanding works, and I hope to continue discovering them throughout my life. Although my time with the ESPS may be over, my experiences as a musician are not!

Michaelene Poworoznik

I was very fortunate that I started lessons with Alla just before turning 6 years old. I am very grateful that I was brought up on the Suzuki method. Since I have been listening to my piano pieces from books 1-7, I developed a love and appreciation for classical music. I am now able to perform pieces I've listened to since I was very young (a great example of this is Chopin's Prelude No. 17, which will be featured in my graduation!). Another great thing about the Suzuki program is the diversity of the pieces. In book seven alone there are pieces that cover three centuries of music, which makes for a great opportunity to learn about the era and styles of music history.

Edmonton Suzuki Piano School has also given me so many opportunities. This year I was lucky enough to be their first Teacher Assistant Intern and helped with recitals, festivals, and especially group lessons. I am also thankful for the opportunity to go see the ESO with the ESPS. After the first time I went last year, I became hooked to the live performances and now I am a regular attendee at the Winspear.

After graduating, I am looking forward to starting the Bachelor of Music program at The King's University in the fall. I will also hopefully be interning again for ESPS during the next school year. In addition, I'd like to thank my teacher Alla as well as my parents for all the support over all of these years.

I am very excited for my (& Selma's) graduation recital in May. I've worked on these pieces for months and am eager to share them. Along with the previously mentioned prelude, I will be performing an excerpt from Stravinsky's "The Firebird", as well as various pieces from book seven. I hope to see some of you there!

## It's Registration Time!

Watch for the 2016/17 registration packages to arrive in your teacher's studio shortly. Within the package, you'll find forms for registering your children in our program and for selecting your preferred volunteer option.

As you complete your volunteer forms, consider volunteering for our next casino. We expect to operate our next casino between September and December 2016. As our sole fundraiser, the casino is very important to our program. Revenue generated from the casino helps to fund group class programming, teacher training and professional development, and facility rentals.

ESPS requires about 50 volunteers to work day and night shifts in a variety of jobs. Volunteers are fully trained by our Casino Advisors, and previous experience is not necessary. And, because the casino is so important to ESPS, your shift will count as a your volunteer commitment for the next two years. Finally, you'll meet other ESPS parents, enjoy a free meal, and have a little fun, all the while lending an important hand to our organization!

Registration packages are due back to teachers by May 6, 2016. *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 6, 2016.*

## You're Invited ....

Consider attending ESPS' General Meeting, to be held on Wednesday April 27, 2016 at 7:30 PM at Suzuki Charter School. We'll introduce members to our Board of Directors, and rept on the 2015/2016 shool term to date. Light refreshments will be served. See you there!

## ESPS Spring Concerts Calendar

### **May 1, 2016 Group Concerts at Suzuki Charter School**

*1:00 Groups taught by Gail, Alla, Nancy, Ken and Rhonda*

*3:00 Groups taught by Tess, Tim, Ruth, Regine, Heather and Eleanor*

### **June 5, 2016 Spring Recitals at Convocation Hall**

*1:00 Students of Gail Olmstead*

*1:45 Students of Brad Heintzman*

*2:30 Students of Nancy Thornhill*

*4:15 Students of Tess Brown*

### **June 11, 2016 Spring Recitals at Convocation Hall**

*6:00 Students of Rhonda McEachen and Melanie Bodnar*

*7:15 Students of Tim Eckert*

### **June 12, 2016 Spring Recitals at Convocation Hall**

*1:00 Students of Eleanor Tsui*

*2:15 Students of Ken Zeller*

*3:15 Students of Ruth Johnson*

*4:30 Students of Joyce Sipsas and Regine Maier*

## Congratulations April Graduates!

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

### **Volume 1**

William Doroshenko  
Linnea Johnson  
Marie VandenBorn

### **Volume 2**

Chloe Giesbrecht  
Joshua Palmer  
Parker Schenk  
Nicholas So  
Jenna Xu

### **Volume 3**

Abigail Chua  
Naomi Li  
Mira MacMillan  
Eric Mierzewski  
Genevieve Salanguit  
Colin Sweetzir

### **Volume 4**

Samuel Heintzman  
Mason Kruger

### **Volume 5**

Silas Truong

### **Volume 6**

Marcus Wong  
Nicholas Yamamoto

*"Beautiful tone,  
beautiful heart."*

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki

Edmonton Suzuki Piano School Book Seven

# Graduation Recital

Selma Hammad  
Michaelene Poworoznik

**May 29, 2016 at 5:30**

Muttart Hall  
10050 Macdonald Dr, Edmonton

*works by*

Mozart Rachmaninoff Chopin  
Stravinsky Bach Bartok

*and more*

