



Twinkling The Ivories

February 2016

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Kim Green

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Coming in September Changes to ESPS' Group Program

For many years, Edmonton Suzuki Piano School has offered a group program to students. Each year, in addition to private lessons, students receive 9 hours of group classes that culminate in a year-end group concert. Each year, the groups are composed primarily based on parent requests for location and scheduling, rather than on student ages, level of achievement, or compatibility.

Consequently, teachers and the Board of Directors have made the decision to pilot a proposed new group system in the 2016-2017 school year. In the coming year, our teachers will pilot a model whereby teachers will teach their own students in group classes.

We expect the benefits of this pilot to quickly become apparent:

- More cohesive groups for students, with a teacher who knows them well
- Better continuity in groups from year to year
- Families within each studio will get to know each other well, resulting in stronger communities where families can support each other
- Teachers will know their own students and can determine effective class sizes and identify who will work well together
- Music concepts like theory can be more thoroughly taught with follow-up and review at individual lessons
- Teachers will choose repertoire that more effectively meets the needs of their own students, and have better capacity to assist with learning at individual lessons

Many of you already attend group classes with your individual lesson teacher and this pilot will not likely affect your family. For some, this pilot will have a more significant impact, and we do realize the ramifications of this decision. We would encourage you to speak to our Administrator, Kim Green, or your teacher if you have concerns, so that we are able to consider your contributions as we continue to plan for the coming year.

Additionally, as this change to our group programming format is a pilot, we will be evaluating the process throughout the year. We will monitor student attendance records, survey parents and teachers at the end of the 2016-2017 group year, and track parent feedback to ESPS administration throughout the pilot.

While there will be an impact to changing the format of how we offer group programming, we are confident that the outcome of this pilot will result in better quality group classes, closer friendships between children in the studios, a stronger parent community within studios, and a better foundation for music theory instruction.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have questions. As always, you can reach us at 780.488.0548 or by email at office@edmontonsuzukipiano.ca.

Get Ready for Winter Recitals – One Beginner Family Shares Their First Recital Experience

Leading up to our first piano recital with my daughter Maya was a very eventful time in her young life. She had been working very hard at her repertoire, but I must admit the “honeymoon” phase of playing the piano had worn off. Maya enjoyed playing the pieces she knew and found easy to play, but anything that was tough for her (newer pieces, or things that needed extra repetitions) became a nightly struggle to practice.

Luckily our teacher Tim started to talk about the recital- what it was, where Maya would be playing and how important it is. This reinvigorated our little 5 year old to start playing again. Tim also did an excellent job of choosing a piece for her that we had just started to learn and because Maya wanted to play her best on the “big stage” she really practiced her piece and came to know it very well. We also were able to get some extra practice in as we left the piano cover open in our music room, and while she was playing with her toys and games, she would just hop on the piano and play her favorite pieces. Because her recital piece was fresh in her memory, she would play that a couple extra times each night on top of our regular practice time.

Maya was very nervous when she talked of playing in front of a lot of people that she didn't know. With some reassurance from Mom and Dad, and Tim, she seemed to be a little more at ease with the idea. We invited lots of family to the recital so that she would see familiar faces. We also wanted her to know how important her big event was to all of us. As the week of the recital approached we kept discussing with her what it would be like and how wonderfully she was going to play. We reminded her that she was going to do great because of all the hard work that she put in.

But the one event that I think overshadowed the recital itself for Maya was..... Choosing the recital OUTFIT!!! Like many little 5 year old girls, Maya loves the Disney princesses and she has a large number of dresses and they are her favorite pieces of clothing to wear. We allowed her to put her outfit together, accessories and shoes included (under the watchful eye of mom). This absolutely made her day and made her want to be involved with as many recitals as possible in the future!

The recital day came and Maya carefully watched the performances that came before her. Maya asked mom to stay back stage with her, and when it was her turn, Tim's nurturing demeanor on stage calmed Maya's nerves. He walked her to the front of the stage and she started with her very official bow. Tim led her to the piano, got her settled and sat with her through her piece.

Maya played her piece flawlessly and when she was finished, leapt off the piano bench, bowed ever so quickly and literally ran off the stage to my wife. We enjoyed the rest of the recital together. To end the evening, our whole family took Maya out to her favorite restaurant for a celebratory meal. She was glowing after her performance, and when I asked her if she was nervous she replied “Daddy, my tummy felt really weird, but I knew that I just needed to try my best and that I could do it!” As a proud parent, that is all I could ever ask for!

Anil Maharaj

2015/2016 ESPS Recitals Calendar

February 7, 2016 Winter Recitals at Suzuki Charter School

12:30 Students of Gail Olmstead

1:30 Students of Tess Brown

2:45 Students of Tim Eckert

February 21, 2016 Winter Recitals at Suzuki Charter School

12:30 Students of Alla Rekhson

2:15 Students of Ruth Johnson and Heather Hindman

3:30 Students of Melanie Bodnar and Rhonda McEachen

February 28, 2016 Winter Recitals at Suzuki Charter School

12:45 Students of Eleanor Tsui

2:00 Students of Ken Zeller

3:15 Students of Joyce Sipsas

4:00 Students of Regine Maier

February 28, 2016 Winter Recitals at 1304 49A Street

2:00 Students of Brad Heintzman



**Fall
Workshop
Fun!**

Students
enjoyed Orff
enrichment
classes with
instructors

Kerri
Kenwell and
Kathryn
Davies at
our Fall
Workshop in
October



Start Planning Your Summer Institute Adventure!

Each year, dozens of Suzuki communities around North America offer Summer Institutes. These institutes are learning holidays 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. Why not consider attending an Institute with your family this summer?

This year, ESPS families are lucky to have the option of choosing from several piano institutes being offered in Canada:

Langley Community Music School Suzuki Workshop – July 17-21, 2016

Institut Suzuki Montreal – July 23-30, 2016

Calgary Summer Suzuki Institute – August 8-12, 2016

Southwestern Ontario Suzuki Institute (Waterloo, ON) – August 7-14, 2016

If you're looking for an even more adventurous location to attend an Institute, a complete listing of Summer Institutes throughout North America (for all instruments) can be found at

www.suzukiassociation.org/events/institutes/.

The Power of A Piano Institute: A Student's Perspective on Attending a Summer Institute

Over the course of one week during summer vacation, I attended the Brandon Summer Suzuki Institute at Brandon University in Manitoba. While I was there, I attended various classes: Some were similar to the master classes and enrichment classes you see at our Fall Workshop and the others included a technique class, a theory class, and a duet class. I was amazed by how much I learned in Brandon. It improved my ability and intelligence with regards to the piano. And although it was a lot of work, it will improve my playing and practicing in the short and long term, and it provided me with a new perspective on songs that I was learning and/or perfecting.

In Brandon, I had the chance to study with an experienced Suzuki teacher named Gail Lange. Mrs. Lange taught me various piano skills which allowed me to improve my play. She also taught me how to practice better, and more efficiently. I wasn't always thrilled with all of the extra practicing I had to do over the week, but she really turned me into a much better piano player. Mrs. Lange also helped me to set some goals for the year ahead. A newfound confidence from learning over the week provided me with a rapid increase in skills which has helped me this year. The difference the BSSI made in such a short time really astounded me and my teacher Tim back in Edmonton.

I also really enjoyed the duets class at BSSI. I was partnered with a student from Ottawa and our skill levels were fairly different. After he worked with us the first day, our teacher Luis went home and composed a piece for us to learn and perform at the final concert. We all collaborated on refining the piece over the week as we learned it, and we titled it "Winters Thaw." It was incredible to perform the world premiere of a piece of music.

A summer institute will change your piano playing in incredible ways. The effects the teachers will have on you and your playing is quick and intensive and the experience is wonderful. A summer institute will provide you with lifelong memories and provide you with tremendous improvements in your piano playing that will last forever.

Quinn Sweetzir

Congratulations January Graduates!

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

Volume 1

Riley Chan
Alexandra Chapin
Aram Drackett
Isobel Gilchrist
Tiah Guo
Fiona Mack
Seyi Oladipo
Abigail Suen
Pauline Van

Volume 2

Benjamin Davie
Jayden Dyck

Volume 3

Tiffany Phan

Volume 6

Madeline Lietz
Quinn Sweetzir

It's a great joy for children to play with friends. They start to play vigorously as though waking from slumber.

Music exists for the purpose of growing an admirable heart.

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki

Catching Up with ESPS Alumni: Daniel Belland

For those of you who attended our 40th Anniversary Concert in December, you'll likely remember Daniel Belland, who impressed us all with his performance of a piece of his own composition, "Shelter". A long-time student of Ruth Johnson, Daniel is an Edmonton-based musician and theatre artist, and is currently finishing up his Bachelor's degree in Jazz and Contemporary Popular Music (Composition major) at MacEwan University. A winner of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's 2012 Young Composer's Project, and the 2013 winner of the Canadian Music Centre's Emerging Composer Competition, his music has been performed by the orchestras in Edmonton and Winnipeg, as well as at the Edmonton Fringe Festival. He completed the Suzuki repertoire in 2010, and now freelances as a pianist, composer and music director. Ruth caught up to Daniel recently, and asked him about his time as an ESPS student.

What were some of your favourite Suzuki pieces?

I definitely loved playing J.S Bach's *Gigue* from his Partita in Bb (a suite I loved so much that I actually learned the whole thing for my grad recital), and Paderewski's *Minuet in G*.

Did you like practicing?

Some days more or less than others, but overall, absolutely. The farther I got through the volumes, the more excited I got about the music!

Do you have any practicing suggestions, strategies, or tips?

Focus on small segments! It's better to practice a single measure 25 times, and really master it, rather than playing the whole piece five times and not really accomplishing much. And if you're getting really frustrated by a section, move on to the next thing and come back tomorrow with a fresh brain!

Do you have any words of encouragement for current Suzuki students and parents?

Stick with it! Don't get discouraged, and don't let yourself compare your progress to others.

Did your Suzuki piano education help you in your current career?

Absolutely! It made me really value really polishing the piece and learning to play it beautifully with great expression. In addition, developing a strong skill of learning music by ear, and being equally strong as a sight-reader has been super helpful.

What is your favourite genre of music to listen to now?

Lately, I've been listening to a lot of indie rock (think Arcade Fire or Mother Mother), and lots of new musicals.

Who is your favourite pianist?

I've got a couple favourites- Gabriella Montero and Marc Andre-Hamelin are at the top of my list!

What are some of the musical projects you have undertaken?

I was super fortunate to participate in the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's Young Composer Project a few years ago, which gave me the opportunity to compose a 5-minute orchestral work under mentorship, and actually have it performed by the ESO! I've also gotten pretty involved in the theatre community, primarily as a Music Director for musicals.

Any concluding remarks?

I'm grateful that I got my musical start with Suzuki! It gave me such a solid musical foundation, which I have taken with me in my further studies.

"Focus on small segments! It's better to practice a single measure 25 times, and really master it, rather than playing the whole piece five times and not really accomplishing much. And if you're getting really frustrated by a section, move on to the next thing and come back tomorrow with a fresh brain!"