



Twinkling The Ivories

April 2020

Going Virtual During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has come at us quickly, and our world has changed dramatically in the past couple of weeks. At ESPS, the most significant change has been the shift from in-person to online lessons. By now, many of you have already begun lessons in this new format, and the experience may have left you with questions about how virtual learning might work for you and your family in the coming weeks.

How will virtual lessons compare to in-person lessons?

In many ways, the two will be quite similar. Students will continue to polish their working pieces and focus on new music as well. Students will work on elements like note-reading, theory, scales and technical exercises. Some students will also continue to work on ensemble pieces or non-Suzuki repertoire. Teachers are likely to adapt how they teach concepts or introduce new materials, and how they engage students will also change. For example, teachers can't necessarily point to the music book and give a direction, so students might find themselves engaging differently and developing an improved level of responsibility. You might find you and/or your older students writing the lesson assignments, increasing everyone's sense of ownership. Additionally, teachers will have the chance to observe how their students work with their at-home piano. Every piano is different, and already our teachers are learning so much by teaching the student on the piano on which they practice every day.

How can we improve the quality of our virtual lesson?

This will be a little different in every studio, but it is safe to say that there will be speed bumps as we set off on this new learning adventure! There are many options to connect, including Zoom, Facetime, What's App and others, and you and your teacher will decide what will work best for you. It is to be expected that teachers and families will have both practical and technical challenges, but here are some tips that might make things a little easier.

- Have the following items on hand, ready to go for the lesson:
 - Music and theory books
 - Practice binder for notetaking
 - Pencil, eraser and highlighter
 - Metronome
 - Headphones, mike, speaker (if you have them)
 - For younger students:
 - The song flashcards from the Volume 1 lyrics book (for Volume 1 students)
 - Your ESPS practice die
 - Stickers
 - The Decide Now app on your mobile device
- Prepare for the lesson by moving toys away from the piano. Before the lesson, participate in a calming activity or fortify with a snack.
- The camera should not be hand-held during the lesson, but placed on a tripod, on a stack of books on a chair, or whatever other creative way you can come up with to get the right angle.
- Your recording device should be placed so that the student is in side profile and the camera is focused downward on the student's hands.

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Going Virtual, continued

- While your student is in the lesson, do everything you can to make sure the room is quiet. The sounds of your pet, other children, the TV in the next room or even dinner cooking nearby will all affect the sound quality for the student and teacher.
- Remember that the sound on your mobile device will be delayed and can be distorted, so be patient and experiment with headphones, speakers, etc. to see what works best for improving your sound quality.
- It may be helpful to limit the internet use of others during lesson time. Higher bandwidth demands can mean interruptions in video transmission.

Why should we continue with virtual lessons?

Right now, everything in our world is uncertain. Our daily routine has been dramatically disrupted, and this is particularly true for our kids. Schools are closed and students are learning at home, most extracurricular activities have been cancelled, and kids are isolated from their friends and family.

But, with virtual lessons, we can maintain one small aspect of our usual routine. Most students have had lessons long enough to have developed a friendly and consistent relationship with their teacher and this regular contact along with daily practice could well be an important tool to help them maintain some level of certainty.

Some teachers have offered virtual lessons for a couple of weeks now, and already they are noticing that for some students, the quality and quantity of home practice has improved. How could it not, when we all have a little more time on our hands? Similarly, this is a great opportunity to play the Suzuki recordings and other music.

What should we do if we are struggling with virtual lessons?

If you are struggling with the virtual format or are experiencing job loss or reduction in income and just aren't sure about the possibility of continuing lessons right now, please get in touch with your teacher. Let them know what's happening or why you are struggling. Everyone is impacted by COVID-19, and it is important for us to work together to get through this.



Right now, music teachers around the world are offering lessons online for the first time and are sharing experiences, ideas, and teaching resources through social media, blogs and teaching groups. Our own teachers are meeting regularly through web conferencing, sharing their experiences, offering suggestions and developing plans to keep the music going at ESPS. They continue to be committed to providing the very best online experience possible for our students. As always, we welcome your feedback as we move forward to develop a new normal. Keep in touch, and let's keep the music going!

the 100-Day Practice Challenge – Ending Soon!

We began the 100-Day Practice Challenge in January and we are entering the home stretch as we near the conclusion on April 30th. Our teachers report that many students are close to achieving their 100-Day practice goal. Way to go! Students, even though we are learning virtually now, remember to report your progress to your teacher every week. Teachers are taking note of which students have been successful and each student who completes 100 days of practice will be entered in a prize draw. Stay tuned to find out if you are a winner!

Congratulations March Graduates

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

Volume 1

Sophia Arndt
Marcus Chan
Evan Kleinmeyer
Solenne Marriott
Rahel Mola
Gurleen Nijjar

Volume 2

Lexi Liu
Alexsandr Ollis

Volume 3

Lucia Arruebarrena
Hannah Tao

Volume 4

Erin Delos Santos
Allison Nguyen

Volume 5

Naomi Li
Isabelle Suen

Volume 6

Erika Dyck
Anna Heintzman

Volume 7

Isaac Chua

***“The heart that feels music
will feel people.”***

Shinichi Suzuki