



Arizona Suzuki Association

Spring 2014

Newsletter

The Truth About Learning to Play an Instrument

by Karen Berger

Special Points of Interest

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Editor's Note: This article was written by a non-Suzuki piano teacher. It was brought to our attention by Hisami Iijima, an Arizona Suzuki violin teacher who felt it was a valuable discussion of the issues encountered by both parents and teachers. If you are interested in other articles written by Karen Berger, visit her blog at www.musicalresources.blogspot.com

Dear Piano Parents:

You're probably getting mailings right now about fall activities for your kids. The soccer coach wants to know if you're doing traveling team, the Little League coach is scheduling practices, the dance teacher is putting her classes together. And you're wondering about piano lessons for little Johnny or Suzie.

You want to know how much Johnny will be expected to practice. You want to know if Suzie can just "try it out" and see if it's "fun." You need to know what kind of instrument I expect you to have. You want to know if you can come whenever it's convenient, and whether I'll be flexible regarding hockey games, ski Fridays, school dances, ice-skating parties, holidays, and play dates. You want to know if I'm "reasonable" by which I think you mean: Can I change my schedule to suit yours, and am I a stickler for daily practice because Suzie has so much else on her plate and "things are crazy around here."

It doesn't usually occur to you to ask what you can do as a parent to help your child with music lessons, but that's something you're going to have to know, too.

I'm in a difficult position as a piano

teacher because I'm afraid of telling you the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I'm afraid because the unvarnished truth is not what you are probably going to want to hear if you are like the majority of my piano parents, and when people don't like what they hear, they tend to bail out. You may go to another teacher (which is fine: Everyone deserves the teacher they are most compatible with). But I'm afraid you may bail on music lessons all together.

Because the truth about learning to play the piano scares people. That's the last thing I want to do.

Benefits of Music Education

We all know the benefits of music education: the improved test scores, the correlation with less drug and alcohol abuse, the benefits of learning to be part of an ensemble and stick with a challenge. Music is one of the most powerful expressive forms we have in our lives. How powerful? *Playing* music (not just listening to it) is used to treat neurological problems, to heal people who have had strokes, to slow down the progression of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

Musician's brains -- as measured by MRIs -- actually work differently than the brains of non-musicians. We (musicians) develop pathways that you don't, which help us make other connections. The ability to play an instrument, particularly a complex instrument like piano, has been linked to less dementia in old age, better cognitive skills, and faster healing from traumatic brain injuries.

Not to mention the sheer joy of it. How many adults do you know who say "I wish my mother hadn't let me quit." You may be one of



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them.

So if I scare you (and your child) away, I'm doing you a huge disservice on many levels.



Learning Piano and Modern Parenting Trends: Not an Easy Fit

The problem is that learning to play piano isn't easy, and what it requires flies in the face of current parenting trends. You know the trends I'm talking about: The ones that have you driving 500 miles a week to ball games, play dates and the like. I had a student once who showed up for piano wearing his karate uniform, after eating dinner in a moving car; after piano lessons, he was headed for night skiing. No wonder this little 6 year old vomited at the piano. I felt nauseated just listening to his schedule.

Look, the truth is that your kid can't be a black belt in karate and a ski racer and a soccer player and a pianist and an "A" student and a dancer and in the school play.

Kids want to try everything, parents panic if they think they are missing the next new thing. You can go broad or you can go deep; that's your choice. But you need to know that learning to play piano takes place in the deep end of the ocean.

The Process (and Practice) of Learning to Play Piano

Playing piano also takes a kind of concentration children are rarely exposed to any more. If you're one of those parents who wants to protect your child from frustration, *you* have got to come to terms with the demands of the big black beast, because learning to play the piano is all about overcoming frustration. It's about thinking through problems, breaking them down, solving them one step at a time, figuring things out, finding creative new ways to approach a challenge, putting the pieces back together and trying again and again and again. Piano lessons are life lessons. There's a reason music students score higher in math. But music isn't easy.

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ASA Fall Workshop on October 17 and 18, 2014.
Make a Note!

ASA is planning our 2014 Fall Workshop which will be held at Orangewood Presbyterian Church, October 17 and 18 with Mark Mutter, violin, and Nancy Yamagata, cello. Mark Mutter will offer a student masterclass from 5:00—6:00 pm on Friday with a teacher session to follow (please see below for more information). Nancy Yamagata will give a masterclass for 9 advanced cello students on Friday from 4—7. Saturday's classes will include masterclasses, repertoire classes, chamber music for advanced students, and a performance by the workshop participants.



Mark Mutter

Mark Mutter is a registered Teacher Trainer with the Suzuki Association of the Americas. He received his Bachelor and Master of Violin Performance studying with Walter Shwede, Angel Reyes and Camilla Wicks. He is the Executive Director of the Suzuki Royal Oak Institute of Music in Detroit, Michigan. He oversees 17 teachers that teach over 170 students. He has been a clinician at Workshops and Institutes throughout the U.S. and has led the SRO Tour Group "Camerata" to Disney World, England, Vienna/Prague, Italy, Greece, Canada, Spain, France, Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany. Mark and his wife Susan have three children; Maria, Paul, and Elizabeth.



Nancy Yamagata

Nancy Yamagata began her cello studies in Los Angeles with Eleonore Schoenfeld. She received a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Southern California and was awarded the Outstanding Graduate of the School of Music in 1978. Ms. Yamagata has concertized extensively as a chamber musician with the Young International Trio, winning prizes in the 1974 and 1975 Coleman Chamber Music Competition. She is the cello coordinator of the Suzuki Strings Program at The Colburn School of Performing Arts in Los Angeles and is currently the director of the Chamber Music Workshop at the Southern California Suzuki Institute at Scripps College. In addition, Ms. Yamagata is a registered teacher trainer for the Suzuki Association of the Americas and was awarded the SHAR Distinguished Teacher Award in 1986.

New at this year's Workshop!

This year's session for teachers will take place on Friday, October 17 from 5:00-8:00 pm. The session for teachers will be lead by Mark Mutter and will feature Mark teaching a student violin group class from 5:00-6:00 followed by the session for teachers from 6:00-8:00. In this session Mark will present ideas for group class teaching. Although the group class will feature violin students, teacher who play any instrument are invited to attend this valuable session.

PPG News

Fifty-nine piano students from four piano studios participated in the Annual Celebration Concert Series of the Arizona Suzuki Association-Phoenix Piano Group on March 1, 2014, at Katzin Hall, Arizona State University.

In the morning and the afternoon, following a full dress rehearsal, students presented formal recitals. The program went from Twinkles performed by Joshua Brown, Jaxon Doolittle and by Isabelle Kazarick, beginning students, to the Book 7 Paderewski Minuet, Op. 14, No.1 performed by Molly Robinson, already attending college.

Violinists Cynthia Baker, Katrina Becker and Lauren Fourt, violist Nancy Rutter and cellist JoAnn Cleland provided string accompaniment for thirteen students with pieces ranging from Schumann's The Happy Farmer to Beethoven's Sonata, Op.49, No.2.

All piano students look forward to this annual event and prepare all year. Performances were very enjoyable. All performers received ribbons for their hard work.

Twenty-eight students completed the 100-day practice challenge with sixteen collecting pledges of over \$1300.00. Four students were given awards for the most pledges and the most dollars collected. The David and Emi Gibbons family provided generous financial support which enabled us to be able to afford the rent for Katzin Hall. Without the generous donations of time and money by the families of participating students, we would be unable to offer such an event for students each year.

A cookies and punch reception followed the concerts.



Conference Celebrates Community: Reflections on Attending My First SAA Conference by Laura Tagawa, ASA President

Although I have wanted to go a SAA Conference for many years, a wide variety of circumstances always seemed to keep me from attending: family commitments, teaching schedule, distance, and cost. As a member of multiple musical organizations at the local and national levels, I also needed to choose which professional development opportunities best fit my needs at that particular time, ranging from taking/re-taking Suzuki training classes, attending workshops, etc. The SAA holds a biennial conference in Minneapolis, MN over Memorial Day weekend, bringing teachers from the US, Canada, and Latin America together to share ideas and build a stronger Suzuki community. After hearing rave reviews from other teachers over the years who had attended, I was ready to experience it for myself firsthand, and this conference definitely did not disappoint!

The 2014 Conference was entitled “Powered by Community.” There were plenty of opportunities for participants to come together, share ideas, and be inspired. Sessions began on Thursday and ran until Monday morning, with every imaginable topic covered – Suzuki philosophy, parent education, instrument specific topics, group class ideas, and technology sessions.

There were also many masterclasses offered during the five-day conference. Masterclass teachers included: Richard Aaron (Cello), Alexa Still (Flute), William Kanengiser (Guitar), Brain Ganz (Piano), James Maurer, William Preucil and Yukari Tate (Violin), Aurora String Quartet and Monet String Quartet (Chamber Music).

The conference featured a wide variety of concerts, and in addition to the sessions offered for teachers, there were many opportunities for students attending – including the Suzuki Youth Orchestra of the Americas, Suzuki Young Artists String Ensemble, Flute Performing Ensemble, Guitar Ensemble, Piano Concerto performance, and Latin American Ensemble. Performances by visiting ensembles included The Boulder Suzuki Strings from Boulder, CO; Stellae Boreales from Ontario, Canada; and Vivaldi Strings from Wheaton, IL. The Preucil Family Players performed the SAA Benefit Concert at Minnesota Orchestra Hall on the final evening of the conference.

As a violinist, there were many highlights for the violin specific sessions which I attended. Having the opportunity to observe world-class violinists – James Maurer, William Preucil and Yukari Tate – teach masterclasses was an amazing experience. The students played at the highest level, with concertos by Bruch, Mendelssohn, and Tchaikovsky performed. Sessions on specific violin techniques included: left hand (Allen Lieb), bow strokes (Cathryn Lee), and vibrato (Edward Kreitman and Carrie Reuning-Hummel).

Three ASA teachers from Northern Arizona University presented a session entitled, *Community, Collaboration, and Communication*. In the session, Kari Barton, Karin Hallberg, and Louise Scott presented

information about structuring a Suzuki program in a school setting, novel teaching ideas in grades K-2 in a group setting, and incorporating Music Mind Games in group instruction.

Connecting with others at the conference was another highlight. There were many opportunities to be a part of the Suzuki family, including attending concerts, a dessert reception, a Sunday brunch (in recognition of Doris and Bill Preucil) and just hanging out at the hotel lobby. It was a great time to re-connect with old friends and make new ones. A sense of connection to Dr. Suzuki was present, with many stories and experiences shared by teachers who knew him as well as his former student from Japan, Yukari Tate. A special lifetime achievement award presented to William Starr at the International Ensembles Concert.

Attending the 2014 SAA Conference gave me a wealth of new information and ideas for me to try out in my studio, in addition to connecting with old and new friends. This builds a deeper sense of community in our shared goals as Suzuki teachers. Inspiring and fostering new ideas in our studios, local and state associations, and nationally are things I value and hope to continue building in our Suzuki community.



Suzuki Young Artists String Ensemble



Karin Hallberg, Louise Scott, Kari Barton presented a session at the SAA Conference

News from NAU School of Music

2014 Curry Summer Music Camp at NAU - Dates: Senior Session: June 22 - July 5 (*entering grade 9 - 13 in fall 2014*) Junior Session: July 6 - 12 (*entering grade 7 - 9 in fall 2014*)

Learn

- Work with NAU School of Music faculty and renowned musicians from across the country
- Full ensemble rehearsals with outstanding clinicians each day
- Attend master classes, sectionals, and other courses that expand knowledge and appreciation of different facets of music
- Private lesson and chamber coaching opportunities

Perform

- Finale ensemble concerts in Ardrey Memorial Auditorium at the end of each week
- Audition to perform for peers in the annual [Student Honor Recital](#), Student Chamber Recital, and Variety Show
- Pianists perform in recital on the stage of Ardrey Memorial Auditorium at the conclusion of each session

Enjoy

- Established in 1950 by Dr. Jack Swartz
- Surrounded by the San Francisco Peaks on the Northern Arizona University campus in Flagstaff, Arizona
- Attend concerts, recitals, and other fun activities such as the talent show, dances, movie nights, camp games, and more!



ASA Board members Louise Scott and Laura Tagawa at the SAA Conference

Teacher's Column

**Would you like to be listed on
the Arizona Suzuki Association**

Website as a registered

Suzuki Teacher?

**Just register today at
www.azsuzuki.org**

Click "Join ASA", then "ASA Membership".

Sign up online or by mail.



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The ASA Board for 2014-2015

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If you would like to vote on this slate of ASA Officers, please go to our website www.azsuzuki.org. Follow the voting link on the home page.

How About a Music Camp This Summer?

Here are some suggestions:

1. Curry Summer Music Camp at NAU. Junior Camp is July 6—12. Senior Camp is June 22—July 5. For more information go to www.cal.nau.edu/camp.
2. Prescott's Chaparral Musicfest Suzuki Piano and Violin Academy (A Suzuki Institute for students in Piano and Violin Books 1—3; Ages 6—12); The dates are June 11—14. For more information go to www.chaparralmusicfest.org.
3. West Valley Youth Orchestra Chamber Music Summer Camp with Quartet Sabaku for students in Suzuki Book 3 or above or comparable traditional students. This camp is held in Goodyear June 9—13. For more information go to www.wvyo.org.

See www.suzukiassociation.org for more Suzuki Camps



ASA
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**ASA Fall Workshop with Mark Mutter and Nancy Yamagata,
October 18-17, 2014**