

Message from the President

The weeks since graduation have flown by and year-end activities multiplied daily. Thanks to all teachers who prepared students and made recordings, then listened to others and came to the graduation recitals to celebrate with their students and families. SAM is fortunate to have a continuing relationship with Orchestra Hall and St. Catherine's and their outstanding facilities for these special performances.

The Suzuki Association of the America's Conference 12 came back to Minneapolis with sessions filled with philosophy, tips, ideas, beautiful student presentations as well as guest artist performances. The keynote speaker, Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, spoke on power struggles, sleep needs, and spirited children at sessions open to parents and sponsored by Target. Timely and pertinent topics for our profession! SAM is the recipient of an SAA Affiliate award for over 20% attendance. This includes a financial award for use with student scholarships and software for the Sibelius music program. Thank you SAA!

During the summer many SAM members will be involved at Institutes: teaching classes, teacher training courses, attending with children. All these experiences come back to Minnesota to nourish our students and their families.

And, though we're always a little reluctant to see summer's end, SAM has a wonderful workshop on deck for our fall meeting. Susan Kempter, SAA Teacher Trainer, is also an author. 'How Muscles Learn' deals with physiology and how we connect body to instrument, then relates it to various pieces in the violin repertoire. In teacher training classes we all learn how to teach the notes and music of the Suzuki repertoire. We also receive guidance on physical set-up, but there are always some students for whom some part of this connection is missing. Susan's points will be valuable for all instruments. 'Between Parent and Teacher' has many useful ideas for the adults in our Suzuki triangle and one session will be open for parents also. SAM's Workshop will be Saturday and Sunday, October 28 and 29. So, do mark your calendars now. Registration materials will be mailed in August. Membership will follow in conjunction with details for our 2007 SAM Graduation.

Several board positions are open for next year. There are several people who have given time to our Association for quite some time, and as their lives take them into new areas, it's time for other members to rotate into leadership and planning. YOU may get a phone call from me soon! But, don't wait. You can always call me first to choose your job.

Our world is full of opportunities. Grab them! Use them! Enjoy them! Share them! I look forward to another vital and enriching workshop in October.

Linda


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Linda Thompson



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MNSOTA/SAM - Joint Presentation

During the past year SAM and MNSOTA (American String Teachers Association with National School Orchestra Association – Minnesota Chapter) boards agreed to share mutually pertinent workshops and presentations. The first co-sponsored pedagogy session took place at the end of April with Nancy Lokken as presenter.

Each year MNSOTA has a Teacher Workshop in conjunction with All-State Orchestra. On August 3, SAM will co-sponsor Karen Oosterbaan for her sessions on Alexander Technique. An early evening lecture and demonstration will involve three Suzuki students. For more information on exact times and fees, contact Linda Thompson:

(507) 289-4575 or minnoh@chartermi.net.

MNSOTA and SAM have planned two additional pedagogy sessions for the coming school year: Peter Howard and Mary West will each do a session—one in January and one in April. Both are on late Saturday afternoon at Liz Ericksen's home in North Oaks. We will send more details as they become available

Editor's Note

Dear SAM Members,

Thank you to all who volunteered articles this summer! Do you need to get out of a rut? This issue of SAM is filled with great ideas for the next school year for both practicing and music theory. Have you ever wished you could have a device you can afford to slow down recordings? Faith Farr has found a way for you to do it free. Rochelle Mazze's article on her "Music Theory Olympics" is a great activity that is easily adapted to all instruments. No matter what instrument you teach, I hope that all will read about "Music Theory Olympics". Have you been reluctant to try the 100 day Practice Challenge? Check out how it affected one of Lissa Thomas's students.

Often articles are solicited, however many are volunteered unsolicited. Please consider offering an article for the next newsletter. Share an activity you have done in your studio, an event you have attended, recital experiences, other ideas you might have. Your creativity is welcome in the newsletter.

This spring there was computer trouble at my house once again. To my knowledge, all articles that were sent to me were retrieved and have been placed in the newsletter. If by any chance I have missed an article, I extend my deepest apology and will be happy to print it in the fall newsletter.

Cindy Uhlemann
Newsletter Editor
tonettasgarden@att.net



How I Survived Music Theory Olympics -Notes on an Experiment-

What is it about theory that strikes fear into the heart of the most diligent student? Is it unfamiliar language and symbols, unawareness of its relationship to performance, boring rote lesson plans and our own inexperience with presenting this information or a combination of all of these? What could we do better as teachers?

We know that reading and understanding music requires knowledge of basics: notation, rhythm, key, pulse, melody and harmony. Students who start at an early age and conscientiously develop their repertoire through repetition memorize their pieces by using their senses: aural, kinesthetic, visual and tactile. (Landers: Talent Education School of Shinichi Suzuki, 1987, pp81-120)) However, long term memory requires an intellectual foundation for long term retention! Theory is the grammatical structure upon which our musical alphabet is based. Can we expect our students to understand their music without a theoretical context?

As Suzuki teachers, we do an exemplary job of teaching pulse, rhythm, melody and harmony. But it is much more “illuminating, motivating and helpful to examine... the parts of music... and understand how they work.” [Schneiderman, ASJ Vol 34 #2, p20-21.] In my studio, I have been experimenting with many different types of media to achieve the basics with my students. I have designated group classes four times a year using Michicho Yurko’s Music Mind Games to play theory games; I use written theory assignments from the Keith Snell Theory Workbooks; I assign web site assisted theory play work—a free site is practicespot.com, and I have instituted a program of learning scales and triads, major, minor, augmented and diminished. However, although some students retained some things, I wasn’t devoting enough lesson time to theory and everyone still didn’t have the elementary vocabulary. I began to think: what would Suzuki do?

Minnesota Music Teachers Association (MMTA) runs an annual Theory Olympics every Spring. Students of many teachers get together and demonstrate their theory knowledge by working their way through a maze of “theory” stations. The students receive “ribbons” for completion of all the tasks. Using this paradigm as my prototype, and working within a Suzuki program context, I designed a project that would meet the following goals: 1. students have fun learning

theory, 2. individual students work together to complete tasks, 3. altruistic (not individual) reward system (my husband’s input was invaluable here!)

First, I developed twelve theory tasks the students had to accomplish, very loosely based on the MMTA model, but mostly geared towards my teaching repertoire and my specific student goals. (I am happy to share these with anyone who wants them—just email me.) Next, I informed everyone in my studio that there would be a “theory olympics” that would last two months. To play, each student had to put in ten dollars. The money was put into an account held by one of the parents. Then, we compiled lists of everyone’s favorite charities and the students were told that their reward for having their team complete all the tasks was choosing, as a team, a donation to their favorite charity (although the teams were unequally distributed—some six and some eight—the money would be equally divided by the number of teams that finished).

Students were placed into one of eight teams, based on their musical development and Group Class assignment, and given a team list of twelve Music Theory Olympic tasks. Each student had to demonstrate proficiency with all of the tasks but to complete and gain credit for the Olympic challenge, everyone in the team had to finish all the tasks! The students were instructed to get together and have theory parties to make certain that everyone in their group could complete all the challenges. Using Music Mind Game materials and practicespot.com as resources, I began the program with everyone in my studio working through the challenges.

During the next two months, teaching was devoted more to reading and theory and less to completing new Suzuki repertoire because of time limitations. However, students did get together and help each other finish their tasks and a great feeling of camaraderie and excitement existed in my studio! Many of the students donated their own money and parents generously added to contributions to total over \$600. Ultimately, five teams completed all their Olympic Challenges and chose their charities, another group effort. With parents providing support, each winning team composed a letter to the charity, an example excerpted below:

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3)

We are Suzuki piano students who would like to make a donation to your charity...

Dr. Suzuki was an educator who believed that making beautiful music was a goal all children in the world could achieve. Although he wanted to teach children how to play well he said: "I just want to make good citizens. If a child hears good music from the day of his birth, and learns to play himself, he develops sensitivity, discipline and endurance...he gets a beautiful heart...if nations cooperate in raising good children, perhaps there won't be any war."

Our teacher challenged us with a Theory Olympics: our team completed the challenge and we improved our music reading and playing ability! The prize for completing our challenge was choosing which charity received the money we raised. We chose your charity so needy children could enjoy the holiday season. We hope our contribution is of help.

Finally, my daughter, a graphic designer and former Suzuki student herself, contributed her talents to design a button which we gave to all the individual students as a reminder of their accomplishment.

The "Olympics" was a fun activity and very timely in this Olympic year. It has been much easier to discuss music structure, meter, key signature and other basics and everyone's reading improved. As planned, it became a wonderful stepping stone to relate Suzuki's philosophy to even the littlest students.

The experiment ultimately produced more questions about how we teach theory than I thought. I would welcome dialogue with teachers who are presenting theory in a systematic way. What models are you using? Do you relate the material back to the literature being learned? Would it benefit everyone to have a "course" of theory, similar to MMTA, based on our Suzuki repertoire? This program is easily adaptable, should this be instrument specific? Could such a course, or at least a course outline, be developed by SAA? Could it be developed by SAM for SAA? Although I know there is much more to be done, the initial work I did was definitely worth the end result and I hope other teachers can benefit from my project.

Rochelle Mazze teaches Suzuki piano lessons in Shorewood, MN. In 1995 she and her family had the privilege of meeting Dr. Shini-chi Suzuki. This meeting had a profound impact on her life. Rochelle has a B.S. in sociology and psycholinguistics (which inadvertently paved the way for her Suzuki teaching) from City University of New York, an M.S. in social research from Montclair University in NJ and a NJ elementary education certificate. Her favorite teachers through the years have been her students.

Theory Olympics - Group 1 - Primary Level

1. Note Names

Name finger "lines and spaces" forward and backward (treble, bass)

Find "C"s, "F"s, "G"s and "D"s on piano

2. Intervals

Identify 2^{nds} and 3^{rds} on magnetic slatea

Play 2^{nds} and 3^{rds} on piano

3. Sharps and Flats

Pick an alphabet card, roll dice (even, sharp, odd, flat) play the indicated sharp or flat on keyboard—total of 5 spins; purpose is to identify sharps and flats.

4. Pentachords/Scales

Play and say the primary chords ([I]home, [V]cousin, [IV]neighbor) in C major.

5. Name/Timed Key Signatures

Identify the primary keys signatures of C, G (#) and F(b); purpose is to recognize one(#) is key of G and one (b) is key of F

6. Rhythms

Print off and practice 10 rhythms from the quarter note quest at practicespot.com. Bring to class.

Clap 3 random choice rhythms correctly on a steady beat (can use blue/jello or rhythm train rhythms)

7. Tempos

Identify the terms: andante, moderato, allegro

Be prepared to play using each speed

8. Musical Terms:

RESOURCE: go to practicespot.com home page. On the left side, click on "free tools"; on the next page, on right side under the heading "quick jump" click on dictionary of terms (or rhythm gym or note wizard).

Know the meaning of legato, staccato, piano, forte, fermata

Demonstrate these terms on the piano

9. Chords: Blocked, Major/Minor

Play the primary (I) home triad of C, G and F.

10. Chord Progressions

Play a chord progression in C, G and F by picking random alphabet cards.

11. Sight-reading

Identify and play on the piano 3 cards from the 5 landmark "C"s you have been studying

12. Measures and Rhythms

Identify a rhythm clapped by clapping back using any rhythm words. Only whole notes, half notes, quarter notes will be used (no rests).

For the complete game at all levels, please e-mail Rochelle Mazze. heart1949@hotmail.com



Reflections on the 100 Day Practice Challenge

By Judy and Haley Schilla

Parent Perspective:

It started as a challenge to the students, practice everyday for a year and you can go out for supper with the teacher to anyplace of your choice. I had seen some students who practiced everyday for years at Suzuki camp and admired their commitment. I just didn't have the time for that in my life, I was too busy.

Once the challenge was on though, my daughter, Haley, said she was going to do it, and they were going to go to Old Country Buffet! This from a child who won't make her bed everyday because it takes too long. So we decided that mornings before school were our best bet to make the time commitment, and we were off.

That was 19 months ago. The first three months were the hardest, and now daily practice has become a habit. This has become our special time together. Practices are in the morning or evenings depending on family schedules. Daily reviews are a given and Haley listens to the CD's if there isn't time to play due to schedule conflicts. On the few days she hasn't been able to play her violin, Haley says she feels like something is missing from her day.

Together we have learned how to adjust through more difficult days and to quit early if it's just not working. Occasionally, she chooses to miss the bus and get a ride to school so the momentum isn't lost. Haley's tone, posture and technique have improved along with her playing ability. Most of all, I see her pride in

her commitment to practicing. And all of this happened for \$4.95 plus tax.

Judy Schilla

Student Perspective:

Practicing everyday means to me like eating, you get to do it everyday or you will starve. I have noticed much better tone and a better bow hold. I listened to the recordings I made of book 2 and when I hear myself now, it definitely sounds better. It is getting easier and better everyday. On the days I don't play, it feels like something is missing.

I learn pieces faster now. Also my posture is improving a lot. It is hard because usually my arms get very tired. Well, the best thing is that I'm working very hard, and it shows.

Haley Schilla

Haley Schilla is a student of Lissa Thomas. Lissa Thomas earned her degrees in Violin Performance and Music Education from Northern Arizona University. She also studied long term Suzuki teacher training with Dr. Louise Scott. In 2001 Lissa founded Dolce Studios, and currently has a studio of 30 violin/viola students.


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The Amazing Slow Downer

by Faith Farr

“If the CD goes too fast for you to play along,” the magazine article said, “use Amazing Slow Downer on your computer.” “What is Slow Downer?” I wondered. A quick Google search revealed a website, a free trial download, and the discovery of terrific practice tool. The Amazing Slow Downer is:

- a computer program written by some guy in Sweden
- that allows you to play *any* CD (e.g. Suzuki recording) (or any MP3/AIFF/Wave/AAC/M4A file)
- on Windows or Mac OS X or Mac OS 9
- at any speed (50% slower to 200% faster)
- *without changing the pitch*

Slow Downer is a great tool for reviewing pieces because you can play along at your comfortable tempo. You can use it like a metronome to gradually increase your speed to performance tempo.

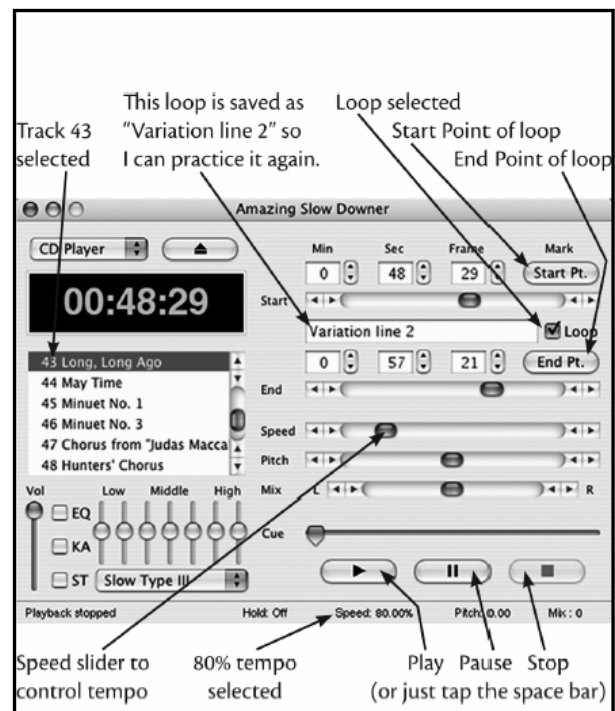
Slow Downer is also a great tool for learning new pieces because it is easy to set practice loops for a portion of a piece. Listen to the piece, and click the letter “O” key every time you hear the start of a phrase or section that you will want to practice.* Slow Downer will remember up to 10 sections – per track – per CD. Another way to set a practice loop is to click the Start Point button and the End Point button as the CD plays. If your click is a little off, you can adjust by adding or subtracting a second to the start or stop time points. Then press Control-1 [2, 3, ...] to have Slow Downer remember this loop for recall later.

There are two types of practice loops that you can set using the Buttons settings in Preferences. Choose “Wait same as loop length” if you want a “my-turn/your-turn” loop. For example, your loop might be the first 2 bars of your piece. Slow Downer will play the first 2 bars, then wait while you play those 2 bars, then Slow Downer will play again, and wait again, over and over until you make it do something else.

Once you are ready to work on a longer section, you might want to choose “Wait 2 [or 3, or 4] seconds” between loops to make a “play-along” loop. For example, your loop might be the first two phrases. Slow Downer will play those phrases as you play along, then wait 2 seconds, then play then again as you play along, then wait 2 seconds, then play them again. It is hard to

play along at the beginning of a piece because the CD just starts — so I plan on coming in at the middle of the bar. When my play-along loop is in the middle of the piece, I like to set the computer start point a few notes before I’m going to start so I can hear when to begin.

Slow Downer can remember up to 10 loops per piece. To help myself remember which section of the music is which loop, I put a bracket into my music with the loop number or write in the margin of my music, e.g. 5=middle section; 6=coda. I also need to write in the



finger number and bow direction for the beginning of each loop to ensure that I am starting correctly.

Slow Downer also has pitch controls. Clicking the pitch slider moves the pitch up and down by half-steps, in case you want to actually transpose into a different key. Clicking the slider arrows changes the pitch by 1/100 of a half-step at a time, which would be useful if you need to adjust the CD to match the pitch of your piano.

The hardest thing for me with Amazing Slow Downer was getting speakers for my computer that would play loudly enough that I could play along nor-

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(Continued from page 6)

mally. My husband figured out how to connect my laptop to the stereo in my studio so that I can use the stereo speakers. I also purchased small auxiliary speakers for the laptop that I can use when I'm away from home. I expect that the desktop speakers that many computers have would work just fine. If you don't have a laptop, you will have to arrange to practice in your computer room.

The latest version of the program is available for download at <http://www.ronimusic.com>. There is a free version lets you play tracks 1 and 2 of any CD to explore the features of the program and find out if it works for you on your computer. The full version is only \$45. When you pay by credit card on the website, you are instantly e-mailed the password to transform the free version into the full version. If you purchase the program, remember to check regularly for the free updates — several new features that make it easier to use have been added in the 5 months that I have been using the program.

There are other computer programs with similar features to The Amazing Slow Downer, such as Transcribe! (www.seventhstring.com) and Transkriber (www.reedkotlermusic.com). I have not had the opportunity to try other programs and do not know how they would compare to Slow Downer.

Footnote:

* Caution 1: When you are using the letter "O" to set loops, Slow Downer remembers the last loop it set or the last loop that you used in this session of the program. For example, if you set 4 loops in one track and then go to a new track in the same session, Slow Downer will start saving loops in Preset 5 for the new track, unless you manually reset it to loop 1. To reset to loop 1: choose the new track; press "1" to reset to loop 1; double-click the track to begin play; click "O" to mark your loops. The loops are saved beginning with Preset 1.

Caution 2: If you already have some loops set, and you want to add more loops to the same track, you will need to be careful not to overwrite the loops you already have. If you know you already have some loops saved: choose the track; click 1, 2, 3, ... until you come to a Preset that is unused. Now double click the track to begin play; click "O" to mark your loops. The loops will be saved beginning with the Unused Preset number.

Faith Farr teaches cello in the Suzuki department at MacPhail Center for Music.

GRADUATION



2006 Graduates—Harp Recital



2006 Graduates—Book 9



Studio News



Jim Peyton

MacPhail Center for Music is proud to announce that its summer Suzuki Piano Camp has now been sanctioned by the Suzuki Association of the Americas as an official Suzuki Institute for 2006.

The MacPhail Center for Music Suzuki Piano Institute will provide an opportunity for students, parents, and teachers to participate in and observe the principles of Talent Education. As an enrichment experience to year-round lessons, the Institute will provide stimulation, motivation and wide ranging keyboard and musical experiences for students of all ages and levels. Parents have the opportunity to share ideas and learn new skills for working with their children.

Suzuki piano students who have completed the Twinkle Variations, along with their parent (or another

responsible, interested adult), are invited to attend. Teacher observers may also register to attend one or all days of the institute.

The student day will consist of classes from the following areas:

- Small group master class/applied piano, working with master teachers on technique, interpretation and performance preparation
- Composer Studies
- Theory, Composition & Improvisation
- Keyboard Skills & Ensemble
- Stage & Performance skills

Enrichment classes:

- Singing & movement
- World Music

Students will also have a closing recital on the final day of the institute, including individual performances, and class presentations.

Our guest clinicians this year will be Dr. James Breckenridge and Beth Turco, Suzuki Specialists. Also joining us will be Tadeusz Majewski, concert artist, Tim O'Keefe, Drumming and World Music, Sandy Waterman, Singing and Movement, and Cindy Monson, J.B. Taylor, Rick Stanton, and Nancy Daley, MacPhail Suzuki Piano Faculty.



Tadeusz Majewski



Studio News



Clea Galhano, a native of Brazil and resident of St. Paul, worked with younger recorder players and Cassia Lima, originally from Saw Paulo, Brazil, taught flute masterclasses and gave a presentation on breathing techniques to flute and recorder students.

Cassia showed us how to use a breath balloon and a breath builder to breathe efficiently. She had everyone's rapt attention right up to the very last minute. It was a Suzuki moment—6 year olds, teenagers, parents, teachers.... All learning something new — together.

Nancy Maloney is a Suzuki Flute instructor at MacPhail Center for the Arts.

MacPhail Flute and Recorder Spring Carnival

Blowing soap bubbles is a learning experience. So is blowing up balloons and blowing water bubbles....if you are a wind player, that is.

Suzuki flute and recorder students enjoyed a morning of blowing for fun a MacPhail's first Spring Carnival on March 25. Parents tended the game tables while students blew bubbles, measured air intake, blew a ping pong ball across a table, spit rice and collected lots of sparkly blowing toys as prizes for playing all the games.

There was lots of music happening, too. Our harp students joined flute and recorder students for a play-in and Mary Halvorson Waldo lead the dancing of the Bourree and Minuet.

We were fortunate to have with us three international clinicians to teach masterclasses. Matthias Maute, a German living in Montreal, is a composer and performer on recorder and baroque flute. He gave solo and ensemble recorder master classes, and introduced the advanced recorder students to one of his newest compositions.



Mary Halvorson Waldo leading the dancing of the Bourree and Minuet.



Calendar of Events

- ◆ MNSOTA/SAM Teacher August 3
Workshop-Alexander Technique
- ◆ SAM Annual Meeting October 28
- ◆ SAM Workshop October 28-29
featuring Susan Kempter
- ◆ Suzuki Fall Festival November 3-4
- ◆ Newsletter Deadline November 10

Submitting Articles and Ideas to the Newsletter Editor

If you would like to submit a letter for “Sammy”, or an idea for a topic you would like to see covered, please do so at any time. I am available by phone, e-mail and U.S. Mail. If you would like to contact me about writing an article, have your studio or program highlighted in an article to SAM-notes, please keep in mind that the deadline for submitting articles for the next newsletter is **November 10, 2006**. You must be a SAM member, an Associate member or have approval from the editor for publication. In addition to your typed submission, please include the following with all articles:

- If you have them, appropriate photos *with* subtitles
- A bio to be printed at the conclusion of your submission
- Contact information. Daytime and evening phone number where you can be reached.

Suzuki Fall Festival *Duluth, MN*

The Lake Superior Suzuki Talent Education Program (LS STEP) in Duluth, MN, will host their biennial Suzuki Fall Festival, November 3-4, 2006. Suzuki students in violin, viola, cello, harp and piano are invited to participate in Friday afternoon/evening master classes, and an all day Saturday workshop, culminating in a performance at 4:00 p.m. Outstanding Suzuki clinicians from around the country will be leading the festival, to be held at First Lutheran Church in Duluth. Contact Janell Lemire, director of LS STEP, for more information or to be placed on the mailing list (phone # 218-525-3598, email jlemire@d.umn.edu).



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