



DECEMBER 2006

## NEWS NOTES

### STUDENT NEWS

**Sharzad Shini** was one of only two soloists representing all the Suzuki piano students in the UK in the recent BSI National Concert at the impressive Symphony Hall in Birmingham. She played Rondo Capriccioso by Mendelssohn to a large and appreciative audience. Congratulations, Sharzad, on your strong performance.

**Alice Wood, Noa Cebon, May Kershaw, Kate, Zoe and Xan Hill** attended the concert performed at Wigmore Hall by the distinguished 80 year old composer Gyorgy Kurtag and his wife Marta. In the first half the violinist had performed the world premiere of his Partita for solo violin. In the audience was Huw Watkins, whose own violin Partita had been premiered at the Wigmore Hall the week previous.

**Alice, Noa, May, and Claudia Bisutti** also attended Huw's own performance of a varied programme of chamber music at West Road Concert Hall only a few days later. He and his chamber partners met the challenges of Bartók, Stravinsky and Zev Gordon with masterful technique, great sensitivity and the use of a wide spectrum of musical colours. CSYM is indeed fortunate to have made his acquaintance, and look forward to more musical liaisons with Huw Watkins in the future.

It was wonderful to see these young pupils experience fine music making by contemporary composers in such fine venues. Who knows how these experiences might affect their own music making as performers, composers, and listeners?

### SPRING TERM GROUP CLASS SCHEDULE

10 Saturdays at Zion Baptist Church Hall  
January 6, 13, 20\*, 27  
February 3, 10, 24  
March 3\*, 10, 24

#### \*GROUP CLASS CONCERT DAYS:

- JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>  
(Twinkles/Scales/Arpeggios Masterclasses)
- MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup> (in preparation for the 18 March Concert)

#### Summer Workshop 2007

Early registration is crucial to help with planning and to secure a place. Thank-you already to those who have already responded. Everyone, please send in your applications as soon as possible

TO: PARENTS  
FROM: BETTY  
RE: SATURDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER

All CSYM Group Classes from 11 AM will meet in Stephen's studio instead of the hall. This is due to an Open House Day hosted by Zion Baptist Church as part of the Mill Road Winter Festival. Although the street access will be open, only our group will have access to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the building. The upstairs door will remain locked; if you need a reminder of the code, please let me know.

#### IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM ZION CHURCH

We have had a request from the people who use one of the other rooms upstairs for our pupils to not use the bell/buzzer outside the building, as it disturbs their sessions. This has happened two times, so please can you phone Betty if you have forgotten the number, and please watch that the children do not ring the bell.  
Many Thanks. (Stephen)

#### DONATIONS NEEDED....

##### From Lynsey Newbery

"Dare I say it, but Santa's bells are jingling in the distance !! and the Christmas concert is nearly upon us. Last year the Christmas Raffle raised £200, and it would have been more if I had not run out of tickets ! You all helped raise this money by donating small Christmas items for two hampers.

Please could I ask you to donate a small quality christmas Item. I will do two hampers , one for the children and a more grown up one. The box is in Stephen's studio - please bring your items no later than **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December**. Thank you so much for your contributions (in advance). I will make sure I get more tickets this year as well, see if we can beat the £200 mark. Lots of festive cheer to you"

#### STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

The DVD of the CSYM Winter Concert 2005 will be available for sale at the 10<sup>th</sup> December Concert: Cost £10 by cash/cheque made payable to "Cambridge Suzuki Young Musicians". Should demand exceed supply, an order form will be available, and these orders should be available within the week. Jon Shallcross, Sally Davis & Penny Mullock have volunteered to help with the project that day.

Jon has again spent countless hours on editing, formatting and copying the DVD. It is a highly-professional gem of a production, and a must-have for every Suzuki family & friend! It will also contain a special Winter Secret that you can only reveal upon viewing at home!!! On behalf of CSYM, deepest thanks to you, Jon, for all your efforts!

#### RE: CONCERT DRESS FOR 10<sup>TH</sup> DEC

There was an omission in the description for boys: plain white shirts are perfectly fine, as well as solid-colours.

## SPRING TERM PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

There will be a number of possible performance opportunities for recommended pupils this coming Spring:

- Sunday 10 March 1  
EPTA (European Piano Teachers' Association)  
Cambridge Festival (Non-competitive)
- Sunday 18 March  
CSYM West Road Concert  
Charity Fund-raising Concert for (RNID) Royal National Institute of the Deaf
- Sunday 25 March  
EPTA Cambridge Piano Competition in Cambridge
- North London Music Festival in April (ref: web)
- Abington (near Oxford) Festival in April. Special class on Grieg. (ref: web)

### From an interview in 'Piano Journal'

Angela Hewitt: A little boy of about 12 came up to me the other day at the National Arts Center where there were a few people queuing to congratulate me and, after waiting in line quite awhile said, "I just wanted to ask you one question. How do you play the Gigue in the Fifth French Suite so fast?!" So I replied, "By practising it slowly for a very long time!"

### A PARENTING CHALLENGE

#### From Betty

Listening is the only way to learn & progress through the repertoire with ease. I challenge any parent to add another 30 minutes of listening to your child's DAILY routine. Try it for a month and see what happens! Let me know when you start, then your results, and I'll report it in the next newsletter and reward you with a CD! - but you must maintain a listening record to be awarded a prize!

## THE MOTIVATING POWER OF LIVE MUSIC FROM Betty

I was very proud and pleased to see so many CSYM students and parents taking advantage of the feast of music performances & activities scheduled during the exciting Cambridge Music Festival, "Mozart, Maths & Music", including: **Alex & Francesca Blake, George Young, Roxanna & Sharzad Shini, Charlotte Hamilton, William Kunz, Christopher James** (Let me know who else I have missed!) It was also nice to see former CSYM students and Kings choristers Richard Gowers & Jon Wimpeney in attendance at Timothy Gowers' lecture/recital about the connections between maths & jazz - watch for them on BBC TV when the annual 9 Lessons and Carols is aired.

Dr Suzuki believed that, with the belief and daily commitment of parents, all children can be motivated towards developing great musical ability through good practice, regular listening and a rich, stimulating musical environment. We are indeed fortunate to find ourselves in a city often over-flowing with music in beautiful venues

with gorgeous acoustics, and frequently, as this past November, music of high-quality, exciting, even great performance.

West Road Concert Hall remains my favourite concert venue, offering a wide range of great music, from solo recitals & chamber music, to the Britten Sinfonia & CUMS university orchestras. Amazingly, some of my most memorable musical experiences have come at little or no expense, particularly by attending the Durufle Requiem recently sung by St John's Choir on Remembrance Day (including former CSYM students Thomas Last & Thomas Mullock) and the relaxed & beautiful sounds & atmosphere of Kings College Chapel on Christmas morning.

Cambridge also lends us easy access to world-class artists performing in London. Wigmore Hall provides one of the richest, most intimate atmospheres for music listening in the country, perhaps in Europe, particularly for chamber music and solo recitals. If you aren't prepared to spend a week-day evening travelling down for a concert and returning very late during school days, why not sample the beauty of Wigmore at one of its relaxed Sunday Coffee concerts before lunch (with drinks included!)

By taking advantage of these opportunities, parents can only help raise a child's level of "musical consciousness" by nurturing their sensitivities and feeding their desire to learn new skills & repertoire. Attending quality concerts in good venues helps develop concentration and listening skills, and will contribute to the child's growth as a sensitive and knowledgeable consumer & audience member of live music in the future. By choosing to spend time with their children in the real world of quality music, parents communicate a strong but subtle message to their children that listening to music can be an important, meaningful, and enjoyable part of life.

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE STUDIO

### From Betty

I've been studying and teaching the Suzuki piano repertoire now for over 20 years, yet never grow tired of the music. It is a continual delight to discover the many links between the technical study in Books 1 & 2 to that of the music in the later & other advanced repertoire. The books are well-designed for the development of natural playing technique, from the youngest child to the most advanced. It also follows the development of piano repertoire from children's folk tunes to Bach through Viennese classical and a bit beyond. It's also reassuring to know that at least tens of thousands of other children around the world are studying the same pieces!

But lately, I've wondered why I sometimes feel musically "fatigued" after hearing a student play a song I've heard many times before, a feeling I also sometimes experience during the teaching of Methode Rose. Yesterday, when I played the CD for a student during a lesson, I had my Eureka experience. Although I was getting tired of the piece, I was not at all tired of Mrs Kataoka's performance - in fact, I really enjoyed its rhythm, energy and dynamic contrasts. The solution to my musical fatigue is really the same thing I remind my pupils when they are fed-up with

Twinkles, or Review or Polishing any piece to a higher standard: ANY piece of music can be a pleasure to listen to, when it is played MUSICALLY, i.e. with beautiful tone, accuracy, ease and fluency. And Suzuki education is incredibly unique in that it offers every child the key to playing musically by training the habits of daily absorption listening, accurate practice, and review.

To illustrate this, record your child at various levels of studying: 1) just learning a piece hands separately, 2) then at a later date when hands are just put together, then 3) after polishing and lots of playing for enjoyment through good review. The musical performance of Stage 1 is a world apart from Stage 1 to Stage 3! And children can immediately recognise which one they prefer listening to!

In order to prevent musical "fatigue" and frustration during the learning process, parents need to shorten the processing time from Stage 1 to 3 by adopting a "no-fail" approach, i.e. Listening/Practice/Review - the tried and tested Suzuki recipe. It requires daily commitment, a clear and constant eye on the current aims and focus, and an unwavering hand on the "rudder" of daily routine. The rate of improvement and progress is truly up to you. No one really likes to practice; we'd all rather be doing something else - it demands energy, concentration, patience and effort, but learning doesn't have to be a painful struggle, nor should it be.

Parents sometimes wonder why one child improves or progresses more rapidly than another. To those parents, I would ask them to find out how that other child learns, i.e. what are their listening & practice habits, how many days in a week/month/year do they practice, etc, how do the parent & child interact? No doubt you will find that the most successful child lives in a "Suzuki-advantaged" household i.e. one committed to daily listening of the CD and to a consistent routine of pleasant, constructive daily practice - the other child does not.

Suzuki music education makes musical learning a perfectly normal way of acquiring great ability and offers EVERY CHILD the inherent reward of being able to perform "musically". And the most exciting thing is what comes next! Once the habits of natural learning and good practice are well-established, the momentum for MORE learning builds rapidly - listening, reading, technique - all combine in a momentum for quick learning. Practice is always a "chore", but the student now realises the pay-off and begins to value the work h/she puts in to achieve the desired result.

It is obvious in the weekly lesson which students listen a lot and practice well and consistently through the week; they come to the lesson well-prepared and already focused on the work they have accomplished. I feel great happiness for them, because these students begin the lesson with a sense of purpose, enthusiasm, and perform with confidence and fluency. If your child hesitates and is unsure, it might be time to review your home learning environment and your own practice "technique". Here are a few questions to help you get a fresh perspective:

#### PHYSICAL/SENSORY/AURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Is your piano in a warm, comfortable space? Is it tuned and well-adjusted? Might you be considering upgrading to a better instrument, or buying a second instrument for two or more students in the family? (Suggestion: Arrange a standing appointment with your tuner at least twice a year, i.e. September & March.)
- Is your practice space in a controlled "no-interruption/no distraction" zone?
- Is the listening routine well-established so the student hears h/her repertoire as often as possible each day? (Suggestion: Besides in children's bedrooms, etc, keep a CD player near to the piano for quick reference, review and motivation)
- Do you have photos of your child performing or piano achievement awards displayed nearby?

#### PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

- Do you organise your schedule so you are able to give your child your full attention at all times? (Suggestion: This will change according to the child's age and repertoire/reading levels; Students in Books 1-2 really do need our undivided attention for technical practice, repetition, learning hands together pieces, etc. However I find that my 13-year-old son practices with more care and focus just when I sit in the same room with him, drink a cup of tea, and watch -without interrupting. Please note, this is after at least 7-8 years of full-time practice with him.)
- Do you and your child understand the details of week's assignments before you leave the lesson? Do you maintain some kind of record of how they are practiced each day, so the child (and you) can see h/her progress through the week when all the jobs have been completed? (Suggestion: Keep a practice diary so that at the end of each practice, you and the child can *briefly* record what target/goal has been achieved, no matter how small.)
- Do you communicate with positive, yet firm comments? Do you ask questions or "tell"? Try managing practice without speaking, only giving smiles for best work, and displaying red, green or yellow cards for rating the quality of work.
- Do you make technique, review (and reading where appropriate) a part of every regular practice?
- Do you encourage your child to listen and evaluate h/her repetition work? Are you able to record/video h/her performance for study?
- Do you organise a time each week just for the enjoyment of playing review & polished pieces?
- Do you smile? Would you want to practice with you?

The rewards of good study are reaped in the ability to play a piece beautifully, with ease and enjoyment. Why do we practice? To learn, to perfect, to ultimately enjoy - these aims underpin every minute of daily practice. Write them down and keep them near to the piano as a reminder to both of you of the important work you are both doing.