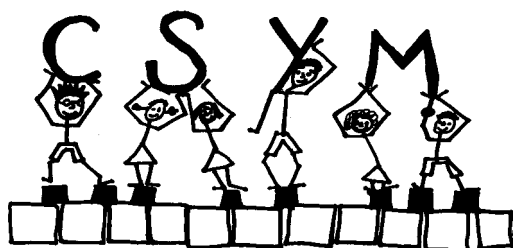


Cambridge Suzuki Young Musicians



News Notes June 2008

What's Inside:

Student News
Maintaining Musical Momentum at Home & Away
Making the Most of the Concert Environment
Considering a Second Instrument?
CSYM Diary Dates 2008-09

Student News

Congratulations to **Madeline Gowers** for winning her class in the Regional Finals of the EPTA Piano Competition. The adjudicators enjoyed her performance of the Clementi Sonatina and invited her to perform in the Winners' Concert at the 30th Anniversary EPTA UK Conference which will be held at Liverpool Hope University, 29th July.

In Touch with the Composer. Several of our students performed pieces by Giles Swayne from his **Scrap-book** at last April's concert. He was unable to attend, but sent us the following email: "I'm delighted the **Scrap-book** pieces have been enjoyed by the children. I wrote them many years ago, but it was only quite recently that they have become widely available. I love writing teaching pieces, and have written several new collections in the last few years. I believe very strongly that we must not cheapen and dumb down the music we offer young children."

Maintaining Musical Momentum At Home & Away

Seeing all the tired faces coming into the studio this week, it is apparent that busy routines and hectic lifestyles are taking their toll this time of year. As both parents and children look forward to a change of pace over the summer months, and weekly piano lessons are on hold for 6-7 weeks, now is a good time to devise a strategy for summer practice. Maintaining practice over the long holiday is essential, so as not to lose the habit of practice or the learning momentum built up over the year. It is extremely frustrating and de-motivating for students and parents to return to lessons in September and find that repertoire is lost and technique weak.

Parents often report that summer and longer holidays at home offer more flexible and relaxed use of their time, so that practice is smoother and easier as children too are fresher and more receptive. But without weekly input from the teacher, how can you keep the interest alive and

the concentration focused? Summer is a good time for focusing on 1) Review & maintaining repertoire, 2) Listening-Listening-Listening, 3) Reading practice including sight-reading, and 4) Learning new pieces for the Autumn Term. Please ask your teacher what is most appropriate, but here are a few suggestions at various ages and stages:

1) Organise a Home Concert (for teddies, pets, friends, and/or family) Design a recital programme, "sell tickets", be sure to enjoy snacks/sweets afterwards. One in July & August – take photos or record to share with us in September!

2) Make a video of Review Pieces. This could be a summer-long project as the child works towards improving each piece before adding it to the final performance video. The video-cam is a great investment for recording, studying and motivating the child's playing.

3) Focus on reading & sight-reading (very useful for students post Book 2) Start collecting music from charity shops, car boot sales – the stop for best value stop is the Used Music box upstairs at Brian Jordan's, Green Street.

4) Improvise and compose. Anything goes! Original ideas, or use stories, pictures, rhymes, objects, experiences, as starting points.

5) Schedule an extra lesson or two! Sign-up sheets available in the studio –

Betty's Summer Lessons: Wednesdays at the ZBC studio July 30, August 6 & 13.

Stephen's Summer Lessons: Mondays and Tuesdays during July and August.

6) Focus on Listening. LISTEN-LISTEN-LISTEN to the CD of old and new repertoire, and take time to investigate and collect more quality piano music for year-round consumption. This tip is essential for those travelling away from home, as listening time needs to be 10X more than practicing.

7) Attend piano concerts at home and abroad. Lang Lang is again a featured artist at the Proms, and some amazing artists perform in summer music festivals throughout Europe.

Re: Holidays Away from Home. For extended holidays, the best thing for your child's motivation and learning momentum is to access a piano, e.g. borrow, hire or, in the case of owning a holiday home, purchase. One of my former students practiced on a piano in a restaurant in Greece and gave an informal performance there one evening!

Students who are committed to daily practice find that practicing **without** a piano can be an interesting change. Rhythm and sol-fa practice can be done from a variety of music-reading materials – ask your teacher what is best for you – and invest in a tuning fork. Listen & study the

score using inner-hearing, sing solfa, or use 'silent practice' by moving fingers along with the CD, (something that same student did on the table-top while on a sailing holiday!) Invest in manuscript paper as copying out music is another great way to memorise new music!

P.S. Music On the Road. Noa & Zak Cebon are travelling in Australia from May to July this year – Both children enjoyed participating in the Suzuki Autumn Festival in Melbourne in May. Here's how they've been keeping up their practice:

"...We think of you often as we drive along singing solfa and playing "name that composer" along the dusty outback roads. We have come up with lots of fun musical car- games as well as listening to our Suzuki recordings. I even have a series of tuning notes on my i-pod that the kids can "name (and sing) that note... We are having an amazing trip, enjoying life on the road, but I know that when our 3 months are up, I will be looking forward to getting back to the piano, and I'll bet Noa & Zak will, too. We hope all is going well with you and CSYM and send you our best wishes, especially with the upcoming Anniversary concert."

- from Ericka Jacobs (& hi from Noa & Zak)

**CSYM HOSTS
DR SUZUKI ANNIVERSARY CONCERT:**

A Celebration of Suzuki Piano
Sunday 29 June 2008 at 3PM
West Road Concert Hall
General Admission: £5

Making the Most of the Concert Environment – from Betty

Attending a piano concert is one of the most effective and easiest ways to naturally motivate children through the experience of a rich, musical environment. In this special concert at the wonderful West Road venue, our own students have the opportunity to hear others their age perform repertoire that provide a "gold standard" in the Suzuki curriculum, as well as open their ears and eyes to old and hopefully new piano favourites.

Parents can make the most of this opportunity by preparing even the youngest ears, and purchase or download as much of the programme as possible so they can listen before-hand. Parents who prepare their children in this way and have realistic expectations of how long a young child will concentrate, (e.g. the first half rather than the entire concert), need not worry that their 4-5 year-old is 'too young to sit this long'. Today's children certainly are not 'too young' to sit and watch a video for an hour or two! Nor are they 'too young' to learn 2-3 languages simultaneously – all depends on **how** these abilities are nurtured.

Dr Suzuki wrote: "Restlessness is due to the lack of ability...the ability to concentrate for long periods of time can be nurtured...Mothers often say, 'My child just cannot concentrate on one thing. When I think he is

doing one thing, he goes somewhere else and begins another. He is so restless that I do not know what to do.' This is thought to be characteristic of children. However, it is only because children do not yet have the ability to concentrate."

This skill is not one that some have and others don't, or one that magically appears at a certain age. It is up to teachers and adults to help children develop the ability to listen and observe with care and attention, as these skills are not only essential in music study and appreciation, but part of everyday communication throughout life. I recently read an interview with a famous gold pro who was asked to review a classical music concert he recently attended – only the second in his life. It was no surprise that he didn't really enjoy it, lost interest after the first few minutes, and would have preferred watching a Tiger Woods match! I would like to chat to this man about his childhood influences, and have no doubt that classical music was never part of his early education.

As early as age 8 & 9 many of our students have become respectful, courteous and highly--discerning concert-hall listeners. I can think of no better way for today's young children to develop their fine and amazing sensibilities. I also can think of no other opportunity that exists for them to grow in this way! We must focus on the NOW, as this ability to learn through the senses, powerful though it is, rapidly diminishes past the age of 5.

Parents, please note: At concerts, please give students the opportunity to practice their "audience" skills through concentrated listening, observation and appreciation of good performance practice. Drawing, colouring and reading books might prove useful in the studio during the early stages, but are inappropriate in the public concert hall, as these activities take the focus away from the stage and the music, distracting the sensibilities and concentration of both students and audience members alike. Also, don't worry if children nod off, as many a young CSYM student has fallen asleep in this atmosphere– the ones who fell asleep 12 years ago may be the teenagers of today performing in the concert! ©

Parents, with good preparation and realistic expectations, you can help your young children develop the skills and confidence they need to make the most of any formal concert experience.

How Suzuki Is Working At Home . "We all enjoy the musical element in our daily lives. I feel that its such a positive experience for us. Henry sees and hears music everywhere, making comments that something looks like musical notes or sounds like soh. I think he sees his music as his friend and especially looks forward to the quiet times in his bedroom listening to the cd's at the end of the day. His little sister sings songs that she has heard Henry singing, despite not knowing all the words! I am sure she will be delighted to start to learn the piano too." From Jacqui Wynn

Considering A Second Instrument? from Betty & Stephen For their own success, satisfaction and continued motivation at the piano, we strongly recommend CSYM students focus exclusively on their Suzuki Piano studies until AFTER the SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF BOOK 2.

By Book 3 the student will have well-established:

- 1) the habit of learning music aurally,
- 2) music reading in both treble and bass clefs at the piano,
- 3) strong technical and listening skills,
- 4) routine practice habits, as well as developed
- 5) an overall deeper musical understanding and appreciation for h/her own achievement at the piano.

At this stage, learning another instrument will be smoother and more successful than if begun earlier, without compromising the long-term success of the piano.

CSYM students who study a second-instrument often achieve a high level of skill over a relatively short-period of time. Students, parents and the new teacher all become very excited over this rapid growth, and attention shifts from the hard-earned and well-developed first foundation to the second-study, which is new, exciting and easy!

To prevent the second-study instrument from overtaking the piano, consider how you can help your child maintain the necessary practice commitment in order for their technical and musical skills to flourish sufficiently to stay motivated. It is a fact that piano practice time naturally increases as the child gets more advanced. Regular and more focused time is needed to master the longer and more complicated scores, to develop reading and learn outside repertoire, to add interest and greater depth to their studies through ensemble work and composition. Students in Book 3 and beyond should be practicing no less 45-60 min daily.

Please consult your teacher re: plans and/or suggestions about starting a second instrument, and inform your teacher when these lessons begin. Note: Instruments studied in music class, without specialist teachers, such as recorder, where practice is not required, do not generally pose a problem.

**CSYM CALENDAR
ACADEMIC YEAR 2008-09**

Stephen's Piano Lessons Start Sat. 6 September

Betty's Piano Lessons Start Mon. 8 September

**AUTUMN 2008
SATURDAY GROUP CLASSES**

September 13, 20, 27*

October 4, 11, 18*

November 8, 15, 22

December 6

Sunday 30 November: West Road Concert

CSYM DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

***October 2008:**

CSYM Fundraising 'Play-a-thon'
Date and Venue TBA

Sunday 30 November 2008:

CSYM Group Concert
West Road Concert Hall
Theme: Duet & 2-Piano Ensembles

April-May 2008:

EPTA Piano Competitions & N. London Festival,
including EPTA Composition Competition

5 July 2009:

CSYM Group Concert
West Road Concert Hall
4-Piano Concert!

5 December 2009

CSYM Group Concert
West Rd Concert Hall

2010 Summer Workshop last week in July Monday to Thursday.

Out of the Mouths of Babes...

From Louise Mitchell

"I was showing Alexander a picture of Angela Hewitt from the cover of the CD that he was listening to (in advance of going to hear her play at Southbank.) He looked at her picture then asked in amazement - "Are we really going to see her live? - so she's playing herself not someone else?"

To my response of yes, he said " Oh wow, that means she will get all the notes right then!!"

After emailing the story to Angela Hewitt, she replied: "It's great that you brought him to the concert, and I hope I played most of the right notes!"