

Suzuki Association of Indiana News

Volume 1, Issue 2

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SAI Update: Bylaw Approval

We have heard back from the SAA about our submission and there are several questions to be addressed about the bylaws - wordings, etc. The bylaws wording will have to be reworked and sent out to SAI members for an email vote (allowed by the bylaws). Also, the SAA pointed out that no formal vote (among SAI members) had been taken to submit the application to the SAA, so your cooperation will be needed for this detail. Hopefully the rewording and vote will be submitted by the end of the year.

~Liz Efroymsen

Suzuki Events Around the State

1. **Indianapolis Suzuki Academy Events:**

- ***Upper Division Chamber Music Concert:*** November 17, 2012, 7:00 p.m., Hasten Hebrew Academy, Indianapolis.
- ***Lower Division Fall Concert:*** November 18, 2012, 2:00 p.m., Artsgarden, downtown Indianapolis.
- ***Fundraising Concert with Michael Strauss:*** Sunday, January 13 at 4:00 at Hastens Hebrew Performing Arts Center in Indianapolis. Violin and cello master classes will be held from 1:30 - 3:30 at Hastens and outside teachers and students are welcome to come and observe.

2. **Invitation from Linda Kummernuss:**

On April 20, 2013, at 2:00 PM, at the Timbercrest Retirement Community in North Manchester, Indiana, the studio of Linda Kummernuss will hold its annual Spring Concert. Traditionally it combines students from North Manchester and Auburn. This year we are extending an invitation to other studios to join us. The repertoire will be selected around February. Teachers can create their own dress rehearsals for students attending the play-in style performance, so only one trip to North Manchester needs to be made. For more information you may contact Linda Kummernuss at: violinlinda@juno.com or at [260.402.2851](tel:260.402.2851).

Teacher Talk

Teaching Transfer Students

By Jillian Chrisman (Indianapolis, IN)

Transfer students are a unique challenge for me, and I'm assuming for other teachers as well. There are several things I do at the beginning.

1. I always respect a transfer student's past efforts and training, even if I see a lot of problems. A new parent and student are most likely still emotionally attached and musically attached to their former teacher. I stay aware of this possible attachment and speak respectfully of the skills they have learned or of their former teacher's teaching points.
2. Thankfully, Suzuki Method teachers use similar terms and repertoire and this makes the transition easier. But of course there will be differences. I acknowledge this to the new student in a way that says it is ok that there are differences. So when one arises it does not throw anyone off balance, and it is not such a surprise.
3. I acknowledge and compliment them that changing teachers is not the easiest thing to do. If they have just moved to the area they are already going through a lot of changes. I try to recognize their possible discomfort, especially if they are shy, and also acknowledge that we'll enjoy getting to know each other.
4. If a new family is from another studio in town I do ask them if they have talked with their former teacher letting them know why they are leaving. I feel that is very important information for the former teacher. When students have left my studio I find it helpful as to why. Sometimes it is something that I can improve upon and sometimes it is just not the right studio for them.
5. Turn your changes into experiments and investigations. One transfer student came to me using only the frog area of the bow. I could tell this was deeply ingrained. Upon being asked about it the parent said that the teacher liked the sound there best. I let another lesson or two go by and then asked the student, "So I wonder what your song sounds like playing near the tip? Let's find out." We had a discussion about the different areas of the bow, the different sounds and why. It opened up the investigation for using other parts of the bow without going against their former training.
6. The psychological realization must be made by the parent (and thus the child) that you are not their former teacher, nor the teacher the parent had when they grew up. This has happened to me only a handful of times, and this is the toughest challenge of all because you will never measure up to their "dream" teacher from before or of the parent's childhood. Why? Simply because you are

not that person. Try to not take it personally and reinforce your experience and training to the parent - transitions do have their challenges for everyone.

7. Lastly, be patient with yourself. It really takes a while, months, to learn all the details of your new student's personality, their relationship with the home teacher, his home environment, level of note reading, past review work, ability to adapt and change, and practice routine. There will be missteps on your part, as well as theirs, as you get to know each other. Have a good laugh, acknowledge it and move on.

Studio Spotlight

Suzuki Performance Preparation and the Importance of Costumes

By Jean Stucky (Goshen, IN)

As advised by a professional violinist and an outstanding, seasoned Suzuki Teacher Trainer, we determined that every time we fulfilled a request for our students to play in public, they would wear costumes. These costumes are unique and tailored by a seamstress (**NOT** just black bottoms and white tops).

We have discovered three things that are very important about our Suzuki School's Students wearing their costumes:

1. They know that they are asked to participate only with selections for their part in the program that they are well proficient to perform so they can always **feel good and be proud of what they do while wearing their costumes.**
2. Every time they wear their costumes they like the look and feel of their costume style and the fact that they are going to be doing something important so upon donning their costumes **they come up to the look with the way they perform!** This revelation and insight came to be very important! We notice that as soon as they have on their costumes they have a different air about them, with heads held high. It is amazingly noticeable!
3. Their costumes clearly **identify them as part of their particular Suzuki Music School (or Studio)** each time they perform. This also makes the students feel



Students from the Suzuki School of Music in Warsaw and Winona Lake in their performing costumes.

good and willing to play with correct bowings as “*young professional musicians and sound musically as their very best at every level of ability,*” as stated by Dr Shinichi Suzuki at Stevens Point U. of Wisconsin.

The costume ties and sashes are made of the same satin fabric color. The dresses are white with a loose cap-sleeve appropriate for bowing movement on the violin. Selected was a “concert-dress-length” that came just below the calf of the leg (waltz-length). Whatever length is chosen, they must all be the same. A proficient seamstress is important to measure and make the dresses and to become the Costume Coordinator as part of our music school or studio. The parents pay close to \$55 for the girls dresses. The School remains owner of the ties & sashes to avoid remaking so many. The dresses can be recycled as are the violins.

The student’s carepersons or parents know that our costume requirements are:

- **Girls:** White costume dress concert length (just at the bottom of the calf of the leg) with (color name) sash, white dress, white knee socks or white tights and black dress shoes (nice – not clunky). Sashes are pinned to the dress hanger after each performance.
- **Boys:** Navy long dress pants, white long sleeved dress shirt, navy socks, (color name) long tie (to be made by seamstress) and black dress shoes. (Ties will be collected after each performance and the students name will be attached).

Also, purchased for performances, was a good keyboard that has weighted keys and a real piano sound so the accomplished pianist can do a good job accompanying our students as they perform when there is no available, well cared for piano. We tune all the violins very carefully by allowing one hour for preparation of the instruments before every performance by:

- Tuning to a good battery operated tuner with sound plus a needle dial (KORG chromatic tuner) that can be set to the pitch of the accompanying piano or keyboard.
- Using masking tape, all shoulder pads are taped onto the instruments so they will remain secure during performance.

It’s important to send a confirmation letter to the person in charge of requesting students to perform, so they know beforehand exactly what is essential for preparation to have a proper performance (i.e. a room that is quiet with long tables on which to place the instruments for tuning and preparation, a place for coats and instrument cases and a place for students and parents to gather while girls sashes are securely fastened and boys ties placed and adjusted). It is wise to go and check-out the space where the music students will be performing to observe if the space, piano and requirements are suitable.

Always, at least two parents are assigned to help as “*stage hands*” at a performance with a list of which students are to be added to go on stage for each musical piece.

Parents also know exactly what their student will be playing during the concert, from the previous rehearsals.

We correspond by e-mail with carepersons or parents so they are always clearly informed where and when to gather before a concert performance. All these things are important to help the students feel secure and to play musically, with confidence. This also allows others in the community to expect professional results.

The SAI News is looking for your news and contributions. Here are some ideas:

Teacher Talk: Each month, we will give one question or topic for sharing your teaching ideas. For our December issue, I'd love to have a couple of sentences and a photo from each of you from your students' holiday performances!

Studio Spotlight: We would like to feature your private studio or Suzuki lesson program. Send in the following information about your program: 1. Who: Studio and teacher (s) name, 2. Where: you teach, 3. What: instrument(s) and age range, what kind of lesson and class offerings, 4. When: How long have you had this studio, and how has it changed through the years, 5. How: tell us about the ways you are involved in your community---what gets your students and their parents most excited---anything else that you want to share.

Reviews: Write a review of 1) books on teaching or playing music; 2) Supplemental literature (technique or performing music, solo or group pieces); 3) Equipment you have tried and love (or don't).

Announcements: Student (or teacher!) accomplishments, Suzuki events in your area, job listings, etc.

Send all submissions, comments, questions, news updates and personal updates to Emily Thompson, emilythompsonviolin@gmail.com

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