

# Suzuki Association of Indiana News

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### **SAI Update**

Jillian Chrisman

Suzuki Association of Indiana Board Meeting was held Feb 3, 2013 at the home of Dawn Evans in Bloomington. Jillian Chrisman and Liz Efrogmson made the trip down from Indianapolis. Emilie Grondin, Sarah Pearce and Maria Mastropaolo attended via internet. Diana Hummel, also of Bloomington, joined us in person. It was an enjoyable one hour meeting.

**SAVE THE DATE!! The most exciting accomplishment was determining the date of the second Annual Meeting. Emilie Grondin will be the host in northern Indiana on JULY 13!**

Other topics discussed were the annual membership fee (20.00 due July 1<sup>st</sup>), SAA questions regarding affiliation process, proposed budget and the annual meeting. A financial report was given (\$354.00) and we added an official position, Media Secretary (Emily Thompson) to our list of officers.

### **From the Media Secretary**

Please encourage your colleagues, students, supporters, and Facebook friends in general to “like” the Suzuki Association of Indiana on Facebook. Social media has the capabilities to spread ideas very quickly and widely among the public, and our organization will gain credibility and influence with a strong web presence. I am encouraging you not to think that the SAI is only for teacher members. What we share with each other in this organization can change the lives of everyone around us, starting with their Facebook feeds. I am also going to be sending this newsletter out to every Suzuki teacher on the original email list to encourage them to join us in the SAI. ~Emily Thompson

### **Suzuki Events Around the State**

1. **Northeastern Indiana Suzuki Guild Winter Workshop:** March 22 & 23, 2013, St. Joseph United Methodist Church, 6004 Reed Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46835. Students will have an individual lesson, repertoire class, and enrichment class each day, and teachers will have the opportunity to observe guest clinicians Elaine Osterbur, Sam Spurbeck, Grace Field, and Ann Baker. The final concert is March 23 at 3 pm. Registration deadline is February 25. Contact Janet Klickman, (260) 485-9681 x406.

2. **Evansville Suzuki workshop:** Evansville Suzuki Program, directed by Carol Dallinger, is hosting their annual March Workshop, March 1 and 2. As part of their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration they will be featuring University of Evansville Suzuki Pedagogy degree alumni who have gone on to distinguished careers: Frank Auer, Nashville, TN; Colleen Fitzgerald, Milwaukee, WI; Beth Hoorelbek Zielinski, Chicago, IL, and guest clinician, Timothy Durbin, Louisville, KY. Workshop begins Friday at 4:00 p.m. with an evening of masterclasses. Saturday begins at 8:30 for a day of group classes and a play down as well as a parent panel by the clinicians. Contact Maria Mastropaolo at [mm9@evansville.edu](mailto:mm9@evansville.edu).
3. **Suzuki Play-in April 20 in North Manchester:** 2:00 PM, at the Timbercrest Retirement Community in North Manchester, Indiana, the studio of Linda Kummernuss will hold its annual Spring Concert. This year Linda is extending an invitation to other studios to join them. 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 the repertoire list and other information you may contact Linda Kummernuss at: [violinlinda@juno.com](mailto:violinlinda@juno.com) or at [260.402.2851](tel:260.402.2851).

### **Twinkle Flash Mob**

*In December, the Suzuki School of Music in Winona Lake, Indiana, had a "flash mob" followed by a performance of Christmas carols in a local grocery store. Here is the story from Jean Stucky, administrator of the Suzuki School:*

All that we rehearsed -- where to stand and when to join went very well. We had a low number of students who could participate for the event so we determined to play only that in which the beginners could participate. That would be "See Saw" and "Twinkle." It went very well! Then we disappeared to the balcony and played a 45 minute Christmas Concert! I forgot to place the students on the balcony bridge before they went down to play the Flash Mob so they were not certain where to stand when they arrived back up in the balcony. This experience reminded us why we have to rehearse every little detail so all will go more smoothly.

The store was so excited about how well it all went that they wanted us to return in a few weeks to do this often -- ha! We could do it again after our Spring concert in May. We learned that we should play a few more pieces during the Flash Mob (Twinkle is so short). The students and parents loved it too! You could just feel the excitement that was buzzing in the balcony (and parents all with cameras) as well as the gathering of shoppers to hear the Christmas carols, etc.

It was important to get the layout of the store and determine beforehand where each student would stand as they waited to join the group. The younger children had their parents with them at all times and from where I stood I could see all the older students for their protection. We took the layout of where each student would quietly go to stand (by the bananas, in the deli, in the food court, by the bakery, etc.) and laid it out in the rehearsal space so they knew exactly what to do. We gave each student a number with their name on it so each week they knew exactly in what order they would appear.

Everybody was so pleased with the results that they want to do it again. Since Suzuki students have everything memorized it is perfect to do "Flash Mobs!" One of the parents uploaded a video to YouTube but has not yet gathered the other parents photos to add more views. A big sign had been added which blocked the pianist's view of the Director so we did have to make some last minute adjustments but it all worked out well for our "first." ~Jean Stucky

Here is the amateur YouTube video.

P2012 1207 Jingle Violin Flash Mob (2:02)

<http://youtu.be/lcUNkAtRbk4>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcUNkAtRbk4&feature=youtu.be>

## **Teacher Talk**

### ***Beautiful Character Part 1: setting aside fear***

Emily J. Thompson

*Emily Thompson is a private teacher and adjunct music faculty at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, IN. She has studied violin pedagogy with Mimi Zweig, worked as an assistant at the IU String Academy, and served on the faculty of Indianapolis Academy of Music (now Indianapolis Suzuki Academy). Her Suzuki training mentors include Linda Stieg, Christie Felsing and Doris Preucil.*

*Nurtured by Love* is Shinichi Suzuki's argument that making music is an integration of all of human experience, and that the spiritual and moral character of a person is just as important as the knowledge and ability to play music. He sums it up by saying, "first character, then ability." We all want to experience the transformative power of music, but how does that impact our day-to-day teaching? What actually happens in lessons to develop the student's character? I suggest that we think about character, not as an add-on, or as an assumption, but as an integral part of our daily decisions in lesson time. As I explored this idea, "what are the decisions that affect character in lessons?" I realized that I was dealing with fears that inhibited positive character development. So I am going to write about these first.

Here are some fears I experience in my teaching:

- Fear of rejection—I might push too hard and turn them off from music,
- Fear of failure—I might not follow all the right steps to develop their playing,
- Fear of student failure—they might not listen or practice enough and then sound bad,
- Fear of disapproval—the student or parents might not agree with my method or opinions.

When a lesson has those unspoken fears in it, I become tense, anxious, and usually negative. I might become tentative and lose focus, or I might start dominating and dictating my ideas to try to get the student to sound better NOW. Fear makes me want to prove my own worth and the value of the student's lesson time and money. Beautiful character goes out the window, and in comes survival mode.

First scenario: a student or parent (or both) comes in feeling tired, or agitated, or frustrated. If you are really lucky, they might have been fighting or crying in the car just before this. Fear says, "I am not adequate to this situation," or, "I am not relevant to their personal life." Love

says, “Come in as you are because I value you and this is my time for you.” How I choose to proceed depends on what I think the student needs. She might need to just pick up her violin and play something to get her mind refocused, or she might need to sit and talk. What has been amazingly effective for me is to try to get to the truth of how the student feels (asking, not assuming), and then affirm her as she is. This does apply to very young children. When they are upset, they are not open to reason OR coaxing. They need to feel understood and valued. It’s not my job to change my student’s feelings or solve her personal life, but I do want her to feel safe to play for me in the lesson. If I can be positive and assertive, then the parent will relax as well and feel sympathy from me rather than judgment about his or her child’s behavior.

If a student is not practicing enough consistently, because he has other priorities, I often feel afraid that he will quit, or that I need to have a confrontation (I hate confrontations!). But why should I feel afraid? Time priorities are their choice. I want to encourage people to choose to learn music, and this is an opportunity to talk about the consequences of their choices, and about the positive benefits they will experience when they practice. Music lessons are a valid, worthwhile experience—why fear that music will lose out to other activities when music has just as many compelling benefits? I can be openly enthusiastic and evangelize for music, knowing that they are free to make their own choices.

Here’s another scenario: the student is not progressing well, or maybe I am trying to explain something and he is not getting it. If I am afraid of failure, I will panic and blank out, or I will take a critical attitude and start correcting the student. It’s not wrong to correct mistakes, but when I stop being afraid, I am free to think clearly about what I do know how to do, and share that. I might come up with a new idea for how to use an exercise or practice a piece. If I am patient with myself, then I am showing patience to my student as well.

When the student’s playing just sounds terrible, I can listen to what the student does as information rather than judging it as good or bad. Love says, “This person is important, and music is a worthwhile use of her time and my time.” Then I can say something positive (and believe it!), and then connect to something that is happening or not happening in the student’s playing.

Sometimes, I am afraid that the parent is not going to approve of me. This can happen with a really unfocused child that I am not sure how to discipline, or with a really bright student that the parent might want to see progressing more quickly. It usually just helps to explain exactly what my reasons are in assigning repertoire, and what my assessment of the student’s strengths and weaknesses are. If I am doing my best in lessons, then there is no need to apologize—and if I make a mistake, there is no shame in apologizing, either. In the most difficult case, I might end up recommending a student to another teacher, but that is not a negative decision if they will fit well with someone else! I have the freedom to be myself, with my own strengths and weaknesses, and share what I know in love.

When I replace fear with love, the lesson feels completely different. I greet each student with acceptance. No matter what comes out of that violin or how this student is moving his limbs around, our time together can be positive and meaningful.

*Share your fears, your loves, and your suggestions with me via email or comments on Facebook or the blog and we can include them in upcoming newsletters.~Emily*

**Coming up in March:**

Beautiful Character Part 2: Values

**Connect with the SAI**

**Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SuzukiAssociationIndiana>**

**Blog: <http://suzukiassociationindiana.blogspot.com/>**

**Send comments, events, and articles to Emily J. Thompson: [emilythompsonviolin@gmail.com](mailto:emilythompsonviolin@gmail.com)**