



Getting the most out of lessons and home practice

Both prior to learning a piece and while polishing it and keeping it polished, the primary goal for the student is an inward hearing of the musical flow of the piece. In the beginning stages of work on a piece, the student's focus is necessarily diverted to tiny technique spots that will stretch them and that they need to master in order to have success with the piece. In the intermediate stages of learning a piece, the student starts to look at the other spots in between the earlier preview spots. This begins the process of linking all of the notes of the piece together, from beginning to end.

Then, once students know every note in the piece, polishing—capturing the musical flow—begins. This includes how the notes flow together in terms of phrases and dynamics, and even their relationship to harmony parts. Before a student can outwardly play a piece musically like this, he or she needs to hear it—to audibly “visualize” it—internally. He or she needs to be able to “audiate.”

Audiation is the word we use to describe the process of thinking music. To audiate is to hear and comprehend music that is not physically present, just as to think is to hear and give meaning to language even when the sound of words is not physically present. Musicians audiate when they recall music they have previously heard, when they anticipate and predict what will be heard next while listening to music, when they create and improvise music, and when they read and write music. Audiation is essential to developing musicianship. Audiation is to music what thought is to words and what visualization is to what we see. In audiation, the musician thinks music rather than numbers or words. This also is one reason why we are utilizing solfege when learning to read music—to learn a musical, “audiated” approach to sightreading from the start.

What does this mean in practical terms? For students in the beginning stages (which for some might well include the first several years of study), a prior newsletter touched on the first part of this topic by emphasizing much listening to recordings of the pieces being studied and yet to be studied. The more students hear excellent recordings and attend professional concerts of fine music that flows, the more their sense of what that sounds like grows. Then their memory of what that sounds like will help them to audiate even when the actual recording is not present. This, in turn, will help them also to have musical flow while they are playing. Truly, at any stage, listening to musical excellence will help the ability and growing complexity of audiation to develop.

Briefly, as a student advances, sightsinging with solfege (nwisuzuki.com/solfege.html) also helps audiation to grow. So too does sightreading a piece of music without playing it—quite literally thinking the music before picking up the instrument to play it. Also, once the piece is polished, internally humming the piece while playing is vitally important. Can you internally hear and outwardly apply more musical nuances each time you play it? Again, listening to the recordings and being able to hum the piece prior to learning it in the early stages is the precursor and foundation for all of this. Much more can be added. In the meantime, be sure to attend our upcoming parent night for more informative and practical information!

Parent Night

For parents of students on any instrument, please join us on Tuesday, Feb. 19, from 7:30—8:30 at NWISC. Sally DuBois, our piano instructor, will be presenting. Come glean valuable insights from her years of observation and experience!

Book Graduation Recitals

You are cordially invited to attend this month's upcoming book graduation recitals, here at NWISC. Sarah S. will be playing on Friday, Feb. 29, beginning at 6:50 p.m. Emily H. will be later the same evening, beginning at 7:40 p.m. Those of you whose recitals are upcoming are especially encouraged to attend!

Reminder: Spring Term tuition is due Feb. 18

As per the calendar, tuition for Spring Term is due Feb. 18. Thank you so much for those of you who have already gotten yours in early!

All tuition statements have already been sent via email. Please check for them. If you don't see one or if you have any questions, please let us know at 465-4040 or nwisc@nwisuzuki.com.

2008 Violin Workshop on Feb. 23



We are so excited by how many NWISC students are registered for the workshop! We look forward to seeing you here on the 23rd. There also will be students from other places, some of whom might not know many other people here. Please help make everyone to feel at home. For example, be sure to encourage others—including each other—when you see something you admire in someone else's playing or conduct.

Some of the students at the workshop may not ever have had the opportunity to participate in group class before. They might not know to keep their eyes on the leader and their scroll pointed towards the leader. They might not know to watch the leader for when to take a bow and when to go to playing position and what part of the bow to be in at what time. Please make sure you remember these things and do them. You play beautifully when you do, which will help the guest teachers truly to enjoy their time here with you!

Summer Institutes 2008

The 2008 Suzuki Summer Institute listings are now up on the web (<http://suzukiassociation.org/events/institutes/>). Further program information also was published in the Winter ASJ this month. Many institutes have early registration deadlines, so start making your summer plans now! For questions about what these wonderful opportunities for growth and enjoyment include, please discuss them with your teacher. Many who have attended them in the past have called them a delightful and much needed booster shot that has carried their student's motivation through even the following hitherto sluggish winter months.