



# NEWSLETTER

*Music is the language of the heart without words. - S. Suzuki*



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## SUMMER MUSIC!

**ZACK EBIN**

The pianist Vladimir Horowitz once remarked, “If I skip practice for one day I notice. If I skip practice for two days, my wife notices. If I skip three days, the world notices.” One of the most crucial factors of success in learning a musical instrument is regular practice. For this reason, a teachers’ least favorite thing to hear at the end of the year is “we are going to take a break over the summer, and we will see you again in the fall.”

Imagine two scenarios. In one case a student takes a break over the summer. They then return to their studies in the fall. They become frustrated because what they remember as being easy last spring is hard again. They need to spend some time doing remedial work and reviewing pieces that have become rusty. They are frustrated that while their friends in group class have moved ahead in the repertoire, they are still where they were last year.

By contrast, imagine a student who practiced all summer. They went to a summer institute or festival, where they not only worked hard, but also went home inspired to work harder all the time. They finally tackled the bad habit in their technique they had been struggling with and are now set up to progress even faster. In their summer studies, their tone has improved, and they are sounding better than ever. This student will return to lessons in the fall with new motivation, better technique, and notable progression in their repertoire. They are excited that when they return to group class, pieces they previously struggled with are now easy to play.

Summer presents a wonderful opportunity for our children in their music studies. No homework, fewer activities, longer day-light hours, and parents with more flexible schedules. All of this means more practicing and music making. In my experience,

students who take their summer studies seriously can make just as much progress from May to August as they do from August to May. By contrast students who take a break over the summer spend August and September rebuilding skills they lost during their break over the summer, and do not progress forward until October.

Keeping students motivated over the summer, can be challenging. But there are ways to do it. As Suzuki students, you are part of a global community. During the summer, there are approximately 70 summer Suzuki Institutes spread out across North America. I highly recommend that you try and attend one! At an institute your children will work hard but also have a lot of fun. They will come home stronger and more inspired musicians. There are institutes nearby in Atlanta, Memphis, Louisville, and more. If you are interested in a musical adventure, check out the institute in Alaska. I look forward to our family's annual adventures to the Newfoundland and Labrador Suzuki Institute and to the Summer String Institute at Western Kentucky University!

Taking your instrument on vacation is another essential way to maintain practicing momentum. Make it extra fun by posing for photographs or videos with instruments in unique places on your travels. Turn your family road trip into a photo essay of places your child played their violin. Letting children busk with their instruments to earn some extra spending cash can also be a big motivator.

One of the ironic challenges of summer practicing is that when you have more time during the day to practice, it becomes harder to get it done. Consider setting aside a specific time first thing in the morning to practice, before the day gets filled with fun activities. It is always beneficial to have practice charts, but in the summer, it is even more helpful in staying organized and keeping track of your work.

Many Suzuki Programs become less active in the summer and have fewer performance opportunities. Keep up summer performances by playing for visiting friends and family or invite your friends over for an informal concert. These types of performances serve as good motivation to keep the students working.

The Middle Tennessee Suzuki Association has many exciting plans in the works for the coming academic year. I hope you will all take advantage of your summer studies, so you are well prepared for the coming year! Wishing you all a fabulous and music filled summer!

# A SUZUKI STUDENT'S CALL TO ACTION: USING REMOTE STREAMING TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BY PERFORMING LIVE MUSIC FOR MEDICAL PATIENTS AND THE ELDERLY

**GEORGIA MARTIN**

Famed reggae artist, Bob Marley, was definitely on to something when he sang in Trenchtown Rock that “One good thing about music—when it hits you, you feel no pain.” Recent research backs up Mr. Marley’s hypothesis. Considerable research in the field of neuroscience confirms a causal link between musical stimulation of the brain and an improvement in mood, memory and even cognition. Studies have also shown that music has concrete benefits when incorporated with various medical treatments or interventions by lowering blood pressure and anxiety induced by medical procedures. Moreover, researchers have determined that live music has superior therapeutic benefits over recorded music. With the advent of readily available and easy to use technologies that allow people to connect through video streaming, another question with important implications emerges: Can live music be harnessed in medical settings and nursing homes through remote platforms for emotional and medical health benefits?

The studies demonstrating that live music provides unique therapeutic benefits often unintentionally expose the significant practical and logistical problems of providing live music on a sustained basis to nursing home residents or patients receiving, for example, dialysis treatments. Arranging a group of musicians or singers to participate in a controlled study for a set period for a limited number of patients is relatively easy. However, providing live music on any sustained basis is logistically difficult and impractical. But rapidly expanding technologies may just be the panacea needed to expand live music directly to those who could benefit from it the most. If it is true that live music provides superior therapeutic benefit over recorded music in certain settings, then it is worth exploring whether live music, broadcast from a remote platform, might provide those same benefits (or at least some of those same benefits). And if so, Suzuki programs throughout the world could become a tremendous resource by providing a ready supply of willing musicians looking for an audience while they practice or hone a particular piece of music for a recital or concert. The key to success though will be making it easy for musicians to connect and schedule music sessions with audience members via a smartphone or tablet. Based on the rapid expansion of remote technologies and the acceptance of their use by nearly every demographic, the hurdle of connecting musicians with audience members is not insurmountable.

At the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, my violin instructor, Dr. Zachary Ebin who serves as Director of the Suzuki Program at Vanderbilt University’s Blair School of Music, wanted his students to continue to play music for others despite lockdowns and cancelled lessons. He turned to remote platforms not only for lessons but to also make his students available to individuals who were home bound and isolated.

It was a tremendous success, but it was difficult to keep pace of all the requests for private concerts. During this period I learned that playing live music, albeit remotely, had a palpable benefit on the listeners. I also learned that there was a need to automate the process of connecting musicians with audience members.

The positive impact a live performance could have on the mental well-being of audience members became obvious during each session. Invariably, the concert would begin awkwardly. The audience member would often look slightly uncomfortable or even nervous. As the musician would engage by explaining or introducing the piece of music, the audience member would usually relax. By the end of the concert, most audience members were fully engaged: smiling, bobbing their heads to the music, and clapping at the end of a piece. While these observations are purely anecdotal, they began to interest me in the effects of music, particularly live music, on a person's emotional well-being and even cognitive abilities.

But Dr. Ebin's idea of connecting his students with elderly people in need of a connection to the outside world quickly became a victim of its own success. As the lock down ground on, more and more people signed up for live music performances. Streaming links and invites were managed by spreadsheets and scheduling the events required too much coordination. During this period, as I watched Dr. Ebin manage the overwhelming burden of scheduling these concerts, it dawned on me that there should be an easier way to connect musicians with would be audience members. Because there are tens of thousands of music students around the world, there is a ready supply of live music that can be streamed to those who could benefit from it. And Suzuki programs throughout the world are a natural place to look for talented musicians ready to share their music with those who might benefit from a live concert.

After all, like other Suzuki students, I practice every day, and our generation is all too familiar and comfortable with accessing remote platforms. The problem though is connecting a musician, at home ready to practice her instrument, with a patient in the middle of a grueling four hour long dialysis treatment. Thus, in late 2022, I built and launched the website [www.concertconnector.com](http://www.concertconnector.com) for the purpose of connecting musicians (in particular music students) with elderly individuals or people undergoing medical treatments who could perhaps therapeutically benefit from live music. The website is a work in progress, but it is my hope that it will become an easy-to-use clearing house of musicians and individuals looking to book a live, one on one musical experience, and perhaps provide intangible benefits that improve cognition, decrease anxiety, or otherwise make a difficult situation a little easier to experience. I encourage you to visit it, sign up or email me suggestions on how it could be improved.

My hope is that Suzuki programs and teachers will use this free platform to enroll musicians available and willing to perform for nursing home residents or individuals undergoing routine treatments. The website has been optimized for smartphones and tablets so that the participants can tune in virtually anywhere. The website is a work in progress, but the goal is that it will become an easy-to-use clearing house of musicians and individuals looking to book a live, one on one musical experience, and perhaps provide intangible benefits that improve cognition, decrease anxiety, or otherwise make a difficult situation a little easier to experience.

# “FACEOFF!”: TACKLING DIFFICULT PASSAGES WITH FUN

FRED SIEKIEWICZ

I learned a great game this past summer while at the Hartt Suzuki Institute in Hartford, Connecticut from Veteran Suzuki teacher-trainer Kirsten Marshall. She used this game, which I call a *faceoff*, in her masterclasses. It's a great tool to help the student “level up” their focus and attention to detail, especially when it’s something a little tricky or awkward.

I call a faceoff with a student when we've been working on a passage or a new concept, and it needs just a little extra push to bring it all together. The rules of the game are simple: I set the conditions for earning a point, something like “play this phrase with these notes slurred correctly, right dynamics here and there, AND remembering to play the B-flat.” If the student does everything asked, they get a point. If not, I get a point. First to 3 points wins the faceoff (could be 5, 7, etc., depending on how many repetitions you want). Maybe it’s for a little prize, or for a sticker, or just for a high-five. Regardless, I the heightened emotional intensity of the faceoff, and the urge to win the game, really changes the student’s attention. It helps them focus on details and challenges them to really put in the extra effort needed to make a breakthrough. In any event, I always keep it lighthearted and fun.

There are two more important elements to a good faceoff: First, the student can do any preparation steps they like to ensure they’re ready for each point attempt. This is especially important when it’s at the game point of 2–2. This develops skills of mental preparation and the attitude of taking each attempt seriously. Second, after the attempt, I ask the student to tell me what they think the ref is going to say before I give my assessment. Do they think they earned the point? This can be one of the most valuable aspects, because it encourages them to sharpen their critical listening and helps me know what they're listening for in their own playing.

Another part of the magic is in picking a good goal. The number of different requirements (correct notes, rhythm, articulation, tone, dynamics) and length of the passage need to be balanced to find a task that is achievable. Ideally it should be right at the student’s “edge”: not so easy that it’s a slam dunk, but not so hard it’s unlikely to work. Sometimes it’s about a combination of skills where the student can already do each thing separately but is having trouble combining them. If I pick something that turns out to be too easy (or sometimes I do this on purpose just to give them an easy win), then I make it a two-step process: “that was great, you nailed it on level 1. Now let’s have a rematch at level 2” and pick a harder goal — adding more elements or going for a bigger chunk of music.

This game is also great parents working with their kids as home teacher, or by a practicer with themselves alone in the practice room. So whether you’re a student, parent, or teacher, try it out sometime when you have something tricky that you want to take to the next level. Who says you can’t have fun while practicing? I think Dr. Suzuki would approve!



# WINTER PLAY DOWN AT AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY





# Parent Practice Tip: “Practice Sheets”

**DEIDRE BACCO**

*A version of the following article was first published in the MTSA Newsletter in Spring 2002 under the “Parent Practice Tips” column. Rather than republish verbatim, Deidre has graciously revised the article to reflect the way these ideas have changed in 20 years of teaching since then.*

I have found Practice Sheets to be very useful. The students and parents from my studio who consistently use a Practice Sheet when they practice at home show significantly progress. For many years, I copied and printed the sheets each week, students and parents would keep them in binders, and would bring the completed sheets to each lesson. Several years ago, I created a spreadsheet in Google Sheets for each student, giving students & parents editing privileges. I update assignments after each lesson, and the student or parent marks the sheet as they complete each task during daily home practice. I can see any student's sheet throughout the week, observe their progress, and form my plan for the next lesson.

The Practice Sheet can include Suzuki listening (polishing, working, and future pieces), additional listening outside of the Suzuki literature, composer reports, totalization, scales, sight-reading exercises, etudes & exercises, review pieces, polished pieces, preview spots for new working pieces, listening to future pieces, preparation for recitals or special performances, workshop/institute review lists, and/or orchestra music. *[Please see the sample practice sheet on the next page]*

On the Practice Sheet, under the day/date, mark the number of times played for each successful repetition. Student and parent each get a vote whether a repetition qualifies to be counted. If there is not a clear agreement, the parent gets an additional vote as the “home teacher” for what they think I (the teacher) might accept. If a dispute still can't be resolved, a video recording of the passage in questions can be sent to the teacher for the deciding vote. **QUALITY, BEFORE QUANTITY!**

A quick note when working on a new piece: Work on a new piece, starting at the end and learn in sections, working backwards. By the time you get to the beginning of the piece, it is strong from beginning to end. If you always start at the first measure, the beginning of the piece can lose energy towards the end, especially if it longer in length.

If the parent and student fill out the Practice Sheet together, it models good habits of how to practice and develops independent learners. When a student's age and ability level naturally dictates that they practice and take lessons without the parent, the habit has already been established and the student is well on their way to being self-sufficient.

Keep in mind that Dr. Suzuki's ideal number of repetitions was 10,000. He would have a student listen to a future piece every day for 3 months, before they would get the 1st note to a new piece. Imagine how well you would know each piece of music if you held yourself to these standards.

Date: 3/8/23 Spring Break	SPRING SEMESTER 2023							WEEKS # 9&10						
	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue							
	3/8	3/9	3/10	3/11	3/12	3/13	3/14							
Suzuki Listening: Polishing Piece: Bk # 6: HANDEL D MAJ, 1st & 2nd mvts	3	3	3	3	3	3	3							
Suzuki Listening: Working Piece: Bk # 6: HANDEL D MAJ, 3rd & 4th mvts	3	3	3	3	3	3	3							
Suzuki Listening: Future: Bk # 7: MOZART MINUET BELLGRADE QUARTET <a href="https://youtu.be/FxhCGF5vwxc">https://youtu.be/FxhCGF5vwxc</a> Listen with music	3	3	3	3	3	3	3							
Warm up: TONALIZATION/DIAMONDS - 1st, 3rd & 2nd positions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
Scales: ALL Major & minor scales + arpeggios (3 octaves - 3 notes/bow)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
Reading / Rhythm: SIGHT READING: RSM Grade 1-5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
Flash Cards: 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th pos	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
Etude / Technique: SHIFTING, POSITIONS, TRILLS, SCHRADIECK, FLOR, KREUTZER	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
Daily Review: Th F S S M T W	W	Th	F	S	S	M	T							
Lesson Review: MON: Bk 4: VIVALDI a min, 1st mvt - INCLUDE SPEED %	76	79	80	80	81	82	83							
Lesson Review: MON: Bk 5: VIVALDI G minor, 3rd mvt - INCLUDE SPEED %	80	80	81	82	83	83	83							
Lesson Review: MON: Bk 5: HANDEL F MAJ, 2nd mvt - INCLUDE SPEED %	77	79	80	81	81	82	82							
POL: Bk # 6: HANDEL D MAJ, 1st mvt	2	2	2	2	2	2	2							
POL: Bk # 6: HANDEL D MAJ, 2nd mvt	2	2	2	2	2	2	2							
WK: Bk # 6: HANDEL D MAJ, 3rd mvt	2	2	2	2	2	2	2							
WK: Bk # 6: HANDEL D MAJ, 4th mvt	2	2	2	2	2	2	2							
FUT: Bk # 7: MOZART MINUET BELLGRADE QUARTET <a href="https://youtu.be/FxhCGF5vwxc">https://youtu.be/FxhCGF5vwxc</a> Listen with music	2	2	2	2	2	2	2							
Recital/Performance/Audition: MOTHER'S DAY RECITAL, May 14 & SPRING SOLO RECITAL, May 15th: HANDEL D MAJOR 2nd mvt	2	2	2	2	2	2	2							
Orchestra:														
Book Recital: <b>BOOK 4 RECITAL</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
TOTAL PRACTICE TIME (in minutes):														
POLISHING PRINCIPLES:														
1. POSTURE/TECHNIQUE														
2. RHYTHM														
3. PITCH														
4. BOWING/ARTICULATION														
5. DYNAMICS														
6. PHRASING														
7. VIBRATO														
8. TONE COLOR														
9. PERFORMANCE TEMPO														
CONSISTENCY IN VIBRATO														
Listen for notes that can be deprived of vibrato:														
1st &/or 4th fingers														
1st &/or 4th finger extensions														
2nd note of a 2-note slur														
Vibrating the notes both preceding & after a shift.														

# DO YOU HEAR FIDDLES OR VIOLINS?

Come join us as we play the National Anthem  
at  
The Nashville Sounds Baseball Game

First Horizon Park  
Friday, September 22, 2023 5:00 call  
Ask your private teacher for details



# MTSA ANNOUNCEMENTS

## 1. Annual Meeting: August 20, 2023

All MTSA members are invited to attend. Find out about the coming year's activities, ask questions, or offer suggestions for how we might better serve you!

[Full Details and Registration at the MTSA website.](#)

## 2. Save the date! September 30th MTSA Fall Workshop

The MTSA Fall Workshop is back! Violin students will participate in workshop group classes with four guest clinicians—Terry Durbin, Ed Sprunger, Tim Barrett, and Kim Barrett—and perform on a final concert. Students may also sign up for masterclass lessons on Friday, 9/29. A mini-workshop track is available for pre-twinklers and early book 1 students. Ed Sprunger will lead a Teacher Enrichment Seminar on Sunday 10/1. Registration opens August 4th.

[Student Information  
& Registration](#)

[Teachers Information  
& Registration](#)

[Pre-Twinkler  
Information &  
Registration](#)

## 3. Concerto Competition: November 12th, 2023!

Details about the third annual MTSA Concerto Competition are now available:

[Full Details and Registration at the MTSA Website](#)