

Performances develop and improve through exposure to an audience – even an imaginary one

Students and parents alike need to understand that a good performance has to be developed and nurtured from the earliest stages, argues Naomi Yandell

How did it go? I asked one of the students at school who'd just performed at a recent informal lunchtime concert. 'It was OK,' came the answer. 'But I rushed the bit in the middle.'

'Never mind,' I replied. 'You have a chance to improve on it in the evening concert next week.' He looked horrified. 'But I don't want to play it again. I've done that piece!' He was convinced that if he played the piece again in public his friends would imagine that this was the only thing he could play.

When I mentioned this reaction to other teachers in the music department they agreed that we needed to do more to teach about 'growing performances'; many students (and parents) need education on this point. Just imagine a professional performer playing a piece once in public and putting it away as 'done'.

In another conversation with a music examiner I explained that I, and other teachers I know, occasionally enter students twice for higher-level exams – especially if there is a lot at stake for their futures. I have never known a first mark to be better than the second: the added experience invariably enables students to identify any problem areas and bring their performance to a higher level. The examiner was aghast. She counted this as failure and even implied that it was a form of cheating because it favoured wealthier candidates. Of course, I accept there are candidates for whom this wouldn't be possible (and a mock exam can work just as well); it is the ratcheting up of pressure that is important.

These attitudes ultimately stem from students and parents hearing professional musicians play at concerts and not realising that there is any kind of process behind the growing of that performance. Instead they seem to believe that musicians are able to play the whole repertoire perfectly and to their complete satisfaction at the drop of a hat. They aren't aware that even the greatest musicians often build up their programmes gradually. They may give low-key living-room concerts or recitals to invited audiences in smart high-class salons before playing the programme in public.

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How to communicate the importance of this better? I favour encouraging this mindset early in the learning experience, as with the development of good stagecraft (as I argued in *The Strad*, September 2016). After all, practising the performance of a piece is very different from practising a piece. It is helpful for teachers to earmark for 'growing' one work that the student particularly likes – maybe explaining to the parents that it needs time and creativity to develop a performance, much as it does to make good wine.

Enthusiasm for practising the performance of this piece can be encouraged at home. If the student is very young, and this is ideal, introducing the idea of lining up their toys as the audience tends to appeal. Parents can even talk 'through' a favourite toy to give gentle feedback. Pets are also helpful for providing a friendly, safe and non-judgemental audience.

Continued on Page 2

Family and friends can be drafted in as the next level, with playing to the class in school as a follow-up. In this way the student learns to develop listening skills as they perform and to use the language of evaluation.

As the student grows more advanced it is a good idea to encourage listening to different performances of the same piece on YouTube or Spotify; this will enable them to appreciate that there are myriad ways to produce a good performance. Most importantly they (and their parents) should be able to tell that their own performance piece improves, and will learn not to rush to say, 'I've done that piece!'

This article appears in the April 2018 issue of The Strad

10 Performance Club

We encourage our students to join the **10 Performance Club** to continue to polish pieces and experience the mastery, ease and fluidity that comes from performing a piece numerous times.

In order to become a member of the 10 Performance Club, you will need to meet the following guidelines:

1. Before beginning your performances, please confirm with your teacher that your piece is polished and ready for performance.
2. Perform the same piece 10 times. This must be a solo performance of solo repertoire, not a group or chamber music performance. A piece such as the Bach Double or Vivaldi Double where both parts are considered solos counts as a performance. String quartets or other chamber works do not count.
3. Perform in front a live audience. If the piece has an accompaniment, it is best to include an accompanist, but not required.
4. Perform at a planned event. Some examples of planned-in-advance solo performances with an audience include: teacher organized recitals of any kind, an audition if it includes a complete performance of the piece, a master class performance with a guest clinician if it includes a complete performance of the piece, and also playing for school, worship service, scouts, a Book Party, distance learning, a specially planned family concert (e.g. holiday event for grandparents), hospital or nursing home visit, talent show, etc. Performing informally in your home for your parents or teddy bears does not count. Your teacher will help you decide if the event counts as a performance.

Students who join the 10 Performance Club are celebrated on the MacPhail Minneapolis Glass Panels on the 4th floor!

Plant Sale Pick-Up:

Saturday, May 19, 2018

9:30 am - Noon, Target Plaza Lawn outside MacPhail Minneapolis
Gerten's has given the MacPhail Suzuki Association a window of 8:00 am - 12:00pm

MSA Board Member, Erin Berg, will notify families by email if the order will not be ready for pick-up by 9:30 am.



We are pleased to announce that **Benjamin Downs** will be joining our Suzuki Piano Faculty, beginning in the Fall of 2018. Ben is already on the MacPhail faculty, teaching piano in the Individual Instruction department and serving as the Overture Preparatory Program Coordinator. He is a Suzuki teacher as well, with Suzuki Association of the Americas certified training, and has taught Suzuki students in various studios for the past few years.

Ben holds a Master of Music degree in piano performance from the University of Illinois, a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance from the University of Cincinnati and a PhD in music theory and history from Stony Brook University. He was also a Fulbright Scholar in Germany.

Ben is eager to build a Suzuki studio at MacPhail. He will be teaching 3 or 4 days at MacPhail, Minneapolis and will teach 1 day at MacPhail, Chanhassen. He will also teach Suzuki piano group classes and is available to accompany as his schedule allows.

Our Suzuki Program is fortunate to have someone of Ben's high level of training and commitment join our team!

CONGRATULATIONS! Suzuki Guitar Group Class and Quartet Concert Performers!



2019 Spain Tour

Students who are age 13 and above by June 20, 2019 are eligible to participate in the tour.

We encourage interested students to register online at:

<http://www.cvent.com/d/2gqkz5>

Password: MCM (case sensitive)

The deadline to register is June 30, 2018.

Questions? Contact Tour Director Joe Kaiser at kaiser.joe@macphail.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, May 18,

Suzuki All Instrument Department Recital, 6 pm, Antonello Hall

Saturday, May 19

Suzuki Harp and Flute Final Concert, 10:00 am, Antonello Hall

Camerata, Sinfonia and Chamber Orchestra Auditions, 9:00-Noon

Sarah Kang Suzuki Piano Studio Recital, 2:00 pm, Gary Sipes Performance Stage

Sunday, May 20

Camerata, Sinfonia and Chamber Orchestra Auditions, 9:00-Noon

Richard Tostenson Piano Studio Recital, 12:30 pm, Antonello Hall

Annette Lee Suzuki Piano Studio Recital, 5:30 pm, Antonello Hall

Wednesday, May 23

Joe Kaiser Suzuki Cello Studio Recitals, 4:30 and 6:00 pm, Antonello Hall

Saturday, June 2

Margaret Haviland Suzuki Viola and Violin Studio Recital, 10:30 am, Antonello Hall

Sunday, June 3

Andrea French Suzuki Cello Studio Recital, 3:00 pm, Antonello Hall

Buddy Program Recital and Trip To Izzy's Ice Cream, 4-5 pm, Room 125

Monday, June 4

Margaret Haviland Suzuki Viola and Violin Studio Recital, 5:30 pm, Antonello Hall

Thursday, June 7

Susan Sophocleus Suzuki Piano Studio Recitals, 6:00 and 7:15 pm, Room 126

Sunday, June 10

Last Day of Spring Semester

THANK YOU!

Tamara Gonzalez, Suzuki Viola and Violin instructor wishes to thank the families and teachers who participated in the "Support Puerto Rico" fundraiser on Sunday, May 6, 2018.

We raised over \$3,000 for the charity!

Thank you to the performers:

**Joy Moeller and Alison Fahy,
Ark Family, Dahm/Chen family, Midwinter family,
Hsieh family, Machalec Family, and the Weber family,**