

MAXINE CASPER ANSWERS COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW IS THE SUZUKI PIANO METHOD DIFFERENT?

The Suzuki method is also called the **Mother Tongue method**. It is as easy as learning your mother tongue and is learned in the same natural easy way.

Suzuki teachers realize how important it is to **listen to the music** that is being learned and played. With the excellent example of the music in the ears daily, the student learns quickly and easily and plays more beautifully and musically.

Suzuki teachers work carefully to see that students are **seated comfortably and securely at the piano**. Careful attention is given to seating at a proper height for each student and support of the feet not only in the studio, but the most important place of piano playing, **the piano at home**.

Suzuki teachers know the **value of observation** and plan for students to observe each other weekly and in performances regularly. Being on a piano "team" makes playing the piano more fun and takes away the loneliness and isolation that is often the plight of pianists.

Suzuki is a parent involvement experience. The parent comes to the lessons with the student and learns right along with the student. The parent is the coach and practice supervisor. Parents don't have to know anything about music to do this, but be willing to learn. They do have to be able to read numbers 1 - 5 to help with correct fingering.

Suzuki teachers usually work with two (or more) pianos during the lesson. Often there is video equipment to record the lessons and a monitor to observe the lesson in progress.

The students have more fun while learning quickly and easily.

HOW OLD SHOULD THE STUDENT BE?

As Dr. Suzuki recommends, starting very young is optimum. Maxine Casper enjoys and works very successfully with students ages 2 years and up. Students of any age benefit from the Suzuki Method approach, even adults!

HOW SOON CAN WE EXPECT TO BEGIN LESSONS?

Lessons begin with observation of other students. The observation period is normally a month or more. The beginning student needs to listen to the CD of the music in Book 1 for at least a month to become familiar with the songs and be ready for lessons at the piano.

By taking the student to see what you want him/her to do, the interest in the activity and comfort level in a strange place is increased. By watching others at the piano, the student and parent learn the piano lesson format. The student becomes familiar with the studio set up and the teacher. Very soon the student is saying, "Mom, when is it going to be my turn?" If everything is ready at the home instrument, schedule a home visit by the teacher and then it is time to begin!

HOW OFTEN ARE LESSONS?

Suzuki students visit their teacher once or twice a week for a private lesson, accompanied by a parent. The teacher encourages siblings and/or other students to observe quietly. So, there is normally at least one other student and parent in the room during the lesson.

HOW LONG ARE LESSONS?

The lesson time is an hour. Most 2 and 3 year olds don't last for a whole hour at the beginning, so their time is shorter and depends on each individual student. Very soon they are able to spend more time watching and playing. Since the most important and valuable part of the lesson continues to be observation of others, plan to come early and/or stay after your lesson at the piano to observe other students each week.

DO WE NEED AN ACOUSTIC PIANO OR WILL A ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD DO?

Even though they look similar, an acoustic piano is a very different instrument than an electronic keyboard. So, if you are taking piano lessons, it only makes sense to have a good standard acoustical piano on which to practice.

- a. The tone is produced in a very different manner and the keyboard keys have a different, often lighter easier touch.
- b. The keyboard performer only has control over the volume, while on an acoustic piano, there is not only volume control, but control over tone quality and sonority.
- c. Students who have only a keyboard to practice on, come to the concert grand in the studio at a disadvantage.
- d. Having an electronic keyboard at home along with the piano can be a good way to create added interest and allow others to participate with the student to increase "fun" and enjoyment of playing together and by using different musical sounds/instrument on songs.

WILL A CHEAP OLDER INSTRUMENT BE OK FOR AT HOME PRACTICE?

The quality of the instrument is the biggest determining factor to success. The hearing of a young child is exceptional. The child will detect a poor instrument immediately. So, the piano needs to be of the highest and best quality that you can possibly afford. You can rent or buy one.

Experience shows that the higher quality instrument encourages more eagerness to practice and longer practice sessions. Students with high quality instruments usually play at a higher skill level sooner, easier and learn more quickly. Not only do they play better, lessons normally continue for a longer period of time with resulting higher skill levels.

WHERE ARE LESSONS HELD - AT THE STUDENT'S HOME OR AT THE STUDIO?

Mrs. Casper teaches in a customized studio area in her home. Since Suzuki teachers usually work with two (or more) pianos, and students play in ensemble with the teacher and others from the beginning, specialized equipment is necessary.

Mrs. Casper has two grand pianos, one is a Yamaha 7'4" MIDI concert grand and the second is a Kawai 7'6" concert grand. There are also 2 Yamaha Clavinovas digital pianos for practice and recording while other students are having their lesson.

The parent is invited to video lessons for instant feedback during lessons and for practice help at home and during performances. A digital recorder can also be used for recording lessons. Students are encouraged to record the lesson and then to view/listen as soon as possible after the lesson. By being reminded of what was said and done at the lesson, students/parents learn more quickly and easily, and have no question of what and how practice is to be done.

HOW OFTEN ARE RECITALS HELD?

Recitals are held every 5 to 8 weeks on Saturday and Sunday afternoons during the school year. Additional individual student recitals are also scheduled as appropriate and as students and parents request. By providing multiple performance opportunities during the year, the student knows well what is expected and how to perform with ease. Self-confidence is increased and students are well prepared for the talent show at school or program at church which can offer additional opportunities to perform for others. Most students perform with confidence and come to enjoy performing.

DO SUZUKI STUDENTS LEARN TO READ MUSIC?

The skill of music reading is a very high priority with Maxine Casper. Students learn rhythm reading from the first lesson through the use of the Kodaly system of music shorthand on 3 x 5 flash cards. Yes, it is so easy even the two and three year olds love the rhythm cards and read and play rhythms quickly and well!

Reading Keyboard Music (RKM) series, a place specific method of reading notation is used a little later to teach music reading. RKM features delightful pieces with easy duets for most pieces. With rhythm reading well in hand, reading standard notation is logical, easy and very quickly learned.

It is a natural progression to learn to read music. The Suzuki student develops reading skills easily and quickly because playing skills are in place. Because the ear is so well trained and in use in playing, Suzuki students also have the ability to transfer music to memory with great ease and in an amazingly short time.

FEES AND MATERIALS

Fees are based on student level and are paid quarterly in advance. A list of fees, materials and other material costs are available in the studio.

When you choose the Suzuki method, you will want to:

1. Buy the books called **Ability Development from Age Zero** (\$13.00) including tax or **Nurtured by Love** by Dr. Sinichi Suzuki, and **Introducing Suzuki Piano** by Doris Koppelman.
2. Purchase several **Suzuki Piano Book 1 CDs** (\$17.00 ea.) including tax, available in the studio.
3. Immediately begin daily listening softly in the background.
4. Schedule your observation of lessons in studio.
5. Schedule and have your piano tuned.
6. Decide what type of adjustable bench and footstool you want, and get them ordered.
7. When everything is in place at your home, schedule an in home visit by the teacher.