

Renaissance Music Academy Suzuki Guitar Lessons

~All Lessons Located at 2020 Kraft Drive~

Registered Suzuki Guitar Teachers

Justin Craig and Marci Craig

The greatest gift you can give to children is not to share your riches with them, but to reveal their riches to themselves.

I. Suzuki Method

Dr. Suzuki

Shinichi Suzuki was born in Japan in 1898. His father owned a factory that built violins. Although he wanted desperately to learn the violin, his father considered it beneath his station in life and would not allow him to do so. Through repeated listening of recordings and disciplined practice he taught himself to play. Renowned teachers discovered his ability and nurtured his development. He was invited to study abroad; his father could no longer refuse. Suzuki traveled to Germany where he befriended Albert Einstein and many prominent musicians and thinkers at that time. Upon returning to Japan he formed a string quartet with his brothers and taught at the Imperial Conservator, this is where he began to develop his “mother-tongue approach.” This approach was inspired by his time spent in Germany where it was very difficult for him to learn to speak German. He observed how easy it was for young children to learn to speak and understand their native language. He won-

dered if learning how to play a musical instrument could be mastered the same way.

Life was very difficult for Suzuki during the Second World War but these times inspired many of his ideas on how to prevent future suffering through educating young children. Suzuki was a man of great compassion and had a great respect for children. By 1946 he had developed his “mother tongue approach” at the Matsumoto Music School; he named his method “Talent Education.” As his students progressed, word of his work spread through Japan, worldwide interest followed. Suzuki believed that what is learned through music will benefit children in whatever career they choose. Through this nurturing education, his greatest desire was to enable all children to have high values, fine sensibilities and beautiful hearts. His goal was to create a better society by creating better human beings through musical instruction. It was not his goal to create professional musicians but rather disciplined sensitive, intellectually well rounded people.

Daily Listening

Based on the mother-tongue principle, the Suzuki method requires daily listening of specific music learned in lessons. We are bathed in language from birth our caregivers are constantly speaking around us and to us directly. Months go by before we speak our first word. More time goes by before we speak in complete sentences. This component of the training is imperative to your child’s musical development. Listening greatly enhances their learning process. We find it directly related to the rate of progress and ease in which new music is learned. Listening does not always have to be active. You may listen in the car or in the background while your child does other activities.

Repertoire and Review: Refine and Internalize

Literature is standardized and carefully sequenced. Each piece prepares the student for the next. Rather than saturate the student with dry exercises, the enjoyable pieces demand specific technical skills to be mastered before moving on to the next. With this said, review of past repertoire is an essential component of the Suzuki approach. Dr. Suzuki spoke many times about the difference between knowledge (the intellectual understanding of something) and ability or skill (the putting of that knowledge into practice through repetition and review). Repertoire and review provide your child with foundation and builds self-esteem. The idea is not to have all past pieces memorized but internalized.

Group Class: Learning from Other Children

While the Suzuki method is very dependent upon the private lesson, it also recognizes the importance of creating, practicing and performing music in a group setting. There is an enormous influence that a peer community has on a child's development. Children learn to watch and listen to others while making music as a group. Group activities and games reinforce concepts and skills learned in the lessons such as, posture and technique. Group class is where a majority of reading skills are practiced and music theory concepts taught and explored.

~All Group Classes are Monday Afternoons~

Reading and Writing Music: Music Literacy

Some people think Suzuki students only play by ear and never learn to read music, this is incorrect. We will rely on your child's innate ability of listening and modeling, since developing the ear first is really the core of producing and enjoying beautiful

music. Like learning language we don't begin reading books before we can speak. We want your child to have a strong foundation of technical skills and correct posture before learning how to read music. Just as we speak and are read many books before we even begin to read and write language. We believe reading and writing music make for a well-rounded musician. We also cover music theory concepts, ear training and dictation. Reading, writing and music theory are emphasized especially in group class.

Repetition: Accumulation

As children learn to speak, the same words are repeated over and over again. Only through frequent repetition can they master the meaning and function of language. After a child learns the word "dog", we do not discard it, never to be used again. Words are repeated and reused to integrate into a growing body of language awareness and ability. Suzuki realized this and stressed the value of repetition. By refining ability through repetition students are able to express more complex, subtle and sophisticated music. It is necessary for parents and teachers to encourage and positively support repetition. The pieces we learn will become part of their repertoire, they will last a lifetime and be enjoyable for just as long.

Learning in a Positive Environment: Celebrate each Small Step

Suzuki believed we should provide students with a supportive environment. Creating a comfortable practice space for you and your child is important. Make sure practice time is quiet and without interruptions. When toddlers are learning to speak we provide encouragement and excitement at the utterance of every small sound and word. We do the same in our music lessons, cheering each accomplishment and encourage you to do so at home. We strive to provide a playful and positive environ-

ment during lessons; this should also be provided during practice sessions at home. A supportive environment also includes a proper size guitar, footstool and chair.

Tone Production: The Highest Priority

In his work with students Dr. Suzuki always placed emphasis on tone production. Music is first and foremost sound. All technique - cultivation of body balance, use of large and small muscles, development of keen listening skills and all the minute skills learned in each lesson, in the end are, in service to beautiful tone. Rich, resonant, colorful tone is the basic ingredient of music. When students are making an effort to produce beautiful tone they are connected and listening to themselves on their guitar. This is the point when we are making music and expressing something unique within us. Producing tone is a lifelong process and always demands attention in lessons and at home practice. Suzuki said beautiful tone equals a beautiful heart.

The Suzuki Student: Respect the Individual Child and His/Her Learning Styles

They need no prior musical training or so called “talent.” Besides, we personally don’t believe in innate talent, only well developed skill, which we will impart on your child. All the child needs is curiosity and/or interest in the guitar. This interest will be fostered during the 6 weeks of “Parent Education.” During this time you will be taking weekly lessons and practicing daily at home providing a positive model for your child. When lessons begin we take care to honor the integrity of each student, celebrate each small step and respect his/her learning style. We acknowledge that all children assimilate information in different ways. It is also important to remember when practicing at home with your child that they may learn differently than you. Cre-

activity goes a long way in the lesson and at home during practice.

Parent: Practice Partner

During guitar lessons you take notes of all aspects of the lesson and understand the purpose of each. Your role is similar to that of a secretary. The clearer your notes are the easier it will be for you to remember what and how to practice teach week. Always ask for clarification if you are unsure. We will focus on one point per lesson. This will change when your child becomes more experienced. Your understanding of the lessons and mechanics of the instrument is very important because at home you are the practice partner. You will guide daily practice providing comfortable but firm parameters. Your job is to celebrate each small success and provide feedback to your child during practice. Accurate and mindful repetition is extremely important. We will provide you with guidance in this area. Repetition must remain enjoyable. .

We require parents of young children to take 6-8 “Parent Education” lessons before formal instruction with your child. These lessons involve you playing and understanding the mechanics of the instrument. AS a result, when your child is learning and practicing you will clearly understand what he/she is experiencing and be better equipped to guide daily practice. You will learn about the physical and mental processes we will develop in your child. The pre- lessons will help you become a knowledgeable and successful home teacher for your child. We use Frank Longay’s (Suzuki Guitar Pioneer and our mentor) Parent Guide. It provides a logical and thorough introduction to the Suzuki approach as it applies to the guitar. You will purchase your own copy to use during the lessons and keep as a valuable resource and reference.

I. Your Suzuki Guitar Commitments *(in a snapshot)*

1. Practice daily (like schoolwork, can't be skipped)
2. Listen to CD everyday
3. Continually Strive for Beautiful tone
4. Technical Excellence
5. Maintain Review (Repertoire)
6. Group Class Attendance
7. On time (5-10 minutes before your scheduled lesson)
8. Create a positive and nurturing environment

III. Learning How to Play Guitar

In lessons with young children we are working at their rate. We cannot speed their progress by pushing them along if they are simply not ready, just as we cannot throw word after word to them each day trying to speed up the first time they speak. They will progress when they are ready. It is our job to create the most positive and nurturing environment for them to flourish and then they will do so naturally. It may be months before your child performs his first piece or first recital. There are more important skills we must develop first, such as focus, posture, and enjoyment of the process and love of the instrument.

Please refrain from introducing new concepts on your own. We understand you may be excited about their progress and may want to see them learn new skills but we guarantee this will only lead to frustration and making the learning process more difficult. It takes much more work to undo bad habits than to introduce new ones.

*Being consistent with daily listening and practicing **only** what your teacher assigns is the best way to support your child's progress.*

IV. The Suzuki Triangle

(Parent-Student-Teacher)

Teacher Commitments

commitment to parent education (parent pre-lessons)

create a positive environment during lessons

impart and foster a joy and appreciation for guitar and music

posture development, continue work toward stability

commitment to develop strong, beautiful tone

constant commitment to previously learned repertoire

desire to create and develop musicianship through the use of phrasing, dynamics, form communicate clearly what is to be practiced daily through out the week

provide motivational ideas, games and activities

Parent Commitments

parent attention and note taking in lessons and group

play the repertoire CD as often as possible

prompt attendance with materials

parent-supervised practice (involved during practice) communicate any questions about material covered during lessons affirmation and encouragement

the ability to “look at the long view”

creative motivational ideas for continued growth express a strong sense of value of a musical education organize the weekly material

Student Needs: We will provide as a team

consistency (lesson attendance, practice)

regular review (encourage the repetition)

support and affirmation

the need to enjoy the process

the need for strong emotional support from parents and teachers

the need to understand the balance between freedom and structure within discipline

V. Resources

-your teacher

Justin Craig, 540 230 5490 (*text is best*)

justincraiguitar@gmail.com

- Other Suzuki parents enrolled with RMA

- Renaissance Music Academy; rmahome.com (calendar, questions about tuition)

- SAA Journal (available at our studio)

- SAA membership

- Suzuki Summer Institutes; check out The Virginia Suzuki Institute and Blue Ridge Suzuki Camp

- Books about Suzuki method

“Nurtured by Love” Dr. Suzuki, “To Learn with Love” William and Constance Starr and

“Helping Parents Practice” Edmund Sprunger “Ability from Age Zero” Dr. Suzuki

VI. Games and Practice Activities

1. Race Game

2. Hang man

3. Barrel of Monkeys

4. Tic Tac Toe

5. Practice snack / reward

6. Bead counter, Dominos

7. Artist Drawing

8. 100 days 100 dollars

9. Points on a chart earned towards an item they desire

10. Create your own incentives, you know your child best. What works for you? Share with your ideas with other parents and your teacher.

VII. Anatomy of a Private Lesson

1. ▪ Teacher will check in with parent about material practiced during the previous week. This is a good time to ask questions or voice any concerns.
2. ▪ Lesson begins with the bow.
3. ▪ During the lesson parents take notes and participate within the context of the lesson when requested to do so.
4. ▪ Interaction is primarily between the teacher and student.
5. ▪ Ask questions if you are unsure what the practice goals are for the upcoming week.
6. ▪ Lesson ends with the bow.

VIII. Studio Policies

Arrive 5 -10 minutes early

· No food, or drinks (other than water) allowed in the teaching studio during lessons. *Please, avoid sugary snacks before lessons.*

1. · Please turn off cell phones during lessons, no exceptions. Please do not text during your child's lesson. Let family and friends know that you will not be available during that time slot once a week.

2. · We provide an area in the room adjacent to the studio for siblings so they may have their own space for activities while your other child has his/her lesson.
3. · No children are allowed to roam premises unsupervised. No children allowed upstairs in the house, up on the deck, or in the shed. Please give a reminder to show consideration for Justin and Marci's property. Cats should be left alone.
4. · Don't forget: Your attention and involvement during lessons is crucial for your child's success.

IX. Mechanics of Tone Production with the Guitar

Nails are the tone producers.

-Right Hand nails should be kept slightly longer than the tips of the fingers. -Left Hand nails should be kept as short as possible, any longer can seriously impede the ability of the finger tip to hold down the string in a healthy fashion.

What You Need:

-Clippers for the Left Hand -A Nail buffer (3-way)

Attending to Nails Daily

-Attending to nails gives your child a chance to have quiet time with you before practice

-keep nails clean, sanded and buffed everyday.

Solutions to Nail Biting

- positive and consistent system of daily and long-term awards
- relaxation techniques
- identification and elimination of stress producing factors in the child's daily life

X. Materials

1. A Six String Classical (Nylon String) guitar of the appropriate size. Talk to your teacher before buying an instrument!

2. A guitar footstool or guitar support.

(Guitar Supports: Gitano/Oasis/Ergoplay Stringsbyemail.com)

3. Suzuki Guitar School Volume 1 Book and CD.

4. 4. CB JRX08 Junior Drum Throne. (Young students only)

The use of chairs in practicing and performance is unacceptable since it leads to poor posture development i.e. dangling feet.

5. Electronic Guitar Tuner (Recommended brands are the Snark, Planet waves, Daddario or the Intellitouch Tuners)

6. "Nurtured by Love" or "Ability from Age Zero" by Shinichi Suzuki (required reading for parents)

7. Music Stand and Practice Log (for Ensemble students only)

8. Nail Care and Supplies, three/four-way buffer, metal file.
"Sally Beauty Supply"

9. A three-ring binder, loose leaf paper, 4-8 tab dividers, blank index cards for keeping notes and handouts organized. Bring this binder to every lesson and group class!

10. There are books, CDs, DVDs and Music Mind Games available to check out. Please write down your name and date when you check out an item.
11. *Most of these items including high quality fractional sized guitars can be found at “Bridge Kaldro Music” in Christiansburg.

XI. Renting or Purchasing a Classical Guitar

Sizing your child for an appropriate sized guitar is very important. Their progress is directly related to the size and comfort of their instrument. In our studio we rent different sized guitars to families. We usually have a variety of guitars on hand that we can use to find the right size for your child. Our rental fee is \$15.00 per month/four weeks, regardless of whether classes are in session. (Meaning if you have the guitar 3 months in the summer but don't have lessons, the rental fees still apply.)

If you would rather buy an instrument, here is what we recommend.

1. Cordoba Classical Guitars-1/2 size Requinto 580 scale length, 3/4 Cadete 615mm, 7/8 Dolce 630mm.

These are high-quality hand-made instruments that are made in all the appropriate sizes are beautiful in tone, look and feel.

1. Eduardo Moreno Moore -Oregon Guitars -01.56.2252496
-<http://www.morenomoore.cl/>
2. Ruben Flores Guitars, -562.598.9800 -http://rubenflores.com/price_flores.html -ruben_flores@rmail.msn.com

XII. RMA Group Concert Dress

Girls

TOP: Blouse, white, long sleeved (no sleeveless tops or tanks)

BOTTOMS: Long Culottes or Dress Pants: Black: (skirts, only if floor length)

Socks and Shoes: Dark/Black Dress (no tennis shoes, no sandals or flip flops)

Boys

TOP: white, long sleeved (no tshirts) BOTTOMS: Slacks, dark (no black jeans, no shorts)

Socks and Shoes: Dark/Black Dress (no tennis shoes, no sandals or flip flops)

Dress for RMA Mixed Recitals and Solo Guitar Studio Recitals are the same; however, students can dress in any color vs. black and white.

XIII. Attendance Policy

RMA teachers are required to provide one make-up lesson per semester. If you are unable to attend your regularly scheduled lesson and could not switch someone else please let your teacher know in advance. Group class lessons will not be made up. Summer lessons missed will not be made up.

IX. RMA Recitals

RMA Mixed Recitals occur monthly on Saturdays. Times are generally at 3:30pm and sometimes a second overflow recital at 4:30. Students who sign up to perform in a recital are required to stay for the duration of the recital, no exceptions. Please do not commit to a recital if you have activities that conflict or overlap. Students are permitted to play one piece only.

It is required that all students performing dress appropriately and understand that this is a serious and special event. Dressing appropriately also shows self-respect, respect towards your teacher, parents and to the audience and other performers. No tennis shoes, flip flops, jeans or t-shirts. Sunday dress attire is appropriate.

Please arrive at least 15 minutes early and immediately report to your teacher to tune. Remember to bring guitar, footstool or guitar support, and drum throne.

X. Other Recitals and Events

Each semester there will be many opportunities for guitarists to listen perform and take part in guitar. We like to provide as many opportunities as possible for students to practice performing and to share their music with others. Some of these opportunities include a performances at local venues, the Radford Guitar Festival, the Boone Suzuki Festival, and at the Farmer's Market during the warmer months. Please remember to bring your guitar, footstool or guitar support and drum throne. Ensemble students must remember to bring music folder, music stand and foot stool or guitar support. I will email periodically updates about these events.

XI. RMA Calendar

RMA offers private and group lessons through out the year. Semester I begins in September and ends in January. Semester II begins in February and ends in June. Each Semester is 17 weeks. Lessons are also available throughout the summer months on a more limited basis. String Extravaganza is a bi annual event featuring all the strings at RMA, including guitar, please mark your calendar for this event. RMA also offers an annual concerto competition; we are proud this opportunity is available to our students. We offer many other events throughout the the year, please see the RMA website for all dates: www.rmahome.com.

XII. Group Guitar Class

Group classes are *required* by all guitar students and are a vital component of the Suzuki experience and development. Parents are *required to be present, participate and take notes* during group class. No drinks, food or gum allowed as it can be a distraction. There are eleven group classes scheduled each semester. However, after much consideration we have decided to offer 16 group classes this semester. This will not affect on group class tuition. We have taken the loss because we believe giving the students a consistent group experience will greatly benefit their playing and enhance the over all group experience.

There is the possibility location, time, and length of group lesson will vary when we are close to the String Extravaganza performance. Please check RMA calendar and make sure this date is available since this is a very special event for us. In addition groups sometimes play at other non-RMA local events.

~All Group Classes are Monday Afternoons~

XI. “Nurtured by Love” Study Guide

Please answer the following questions based on the book by Dr. Suzuki.

Please make notes using page numbers that we will be able to share actual quotes from

the text.

1. Describe your understanding of the “Mother Tongue” approach using page numbers from the text.
 2. Is the Talent Education Method described by Dr. Suzuki only useful in music education? (Page numbers from text)
 3. Share some example from the book that you were especially able to relate to for any reason. Please write page numbers.
 4. Do you have any games or activities that have worked for you and your child to make practicing easier?
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