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MSU Community Music School honors its Suzuki Program's Founder

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – To celebrate 25 years of dedication to the Suzuki Program and the enrichment of the musical lives of her students, the MSU Community Music School (CMS) is honoring Dr. Judy Palac on **Thurs., May 6**, with a Spring Suzuki Strings Concert **at 5:30 p.m.** Palac founded the Suzuki Program at CMS and now serves as the program's director emeritus.

Under Palac's tenure, the Suzuki Program at CMS has reached approximately 3,000 local children and has grown to include six instruments, which are now taught through the Suzuki method. The premise of the method is that learning is the product of environment and that any skill can be learned when broken into small, manageable steps. Students begin as early as age 3.

At the Suzuki Strings Concert, which will be held at the **MSU Community Music School Auditorium**, 841 Timberlane St. East Lansing, former and current Suzuki students and teachers will recognize Palac and honor her work with a performance of Bach's Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins, First Movement.

"The piece was chosen because it is part of the standard Suzuki violin/viola repertoire," said Susanne Garber, director of the CMS Suzuki Program. "Every student learns both the first violin and second violin/viola parts, and it is considered to be one of the many plateaus to reach during the journey of the Suzuki experience."

Palac cultivated the CMS Suzuki Program from its predecessor, the MSU Teacher Training program. It is one of the original seed programs that started the MSU Community Music School in 1993. Over the years, Suzuki students have gone to work in a myriad of careers that include professional performance in venues ranging from orchestras to rock bands.

Anne Kearney-Looman, CMS Suzuki Program assistant director, says that Palac's greatest achievement is the training of the many exceptional teachers who have worked with Palac in the Suzuki Program. Kearney-Looman first enrolled in Palac's Suzuki pedagogy course in 1986 and went on to teach for the MSU Suzuki Program. Kearney-Looman says that she is impressed by Palac's wealth of knowledge.

“I have always been in awe of the vast amount of information Judy possesses about every aspect of teaching. I am continuously amazed by the research statistics that she can state [from memory],” said Kearney-Looman. “Despite her vast wealth of knowledge, she is very humble. I also really respect the confidence she has in young inexperienced teachers.”

In addition to teaching both strings and music wellness at the MSU Community Music School, Palac is an associate professor of music education at the MSU College of Music, and has been published in such journals as *American String Teacher* and *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*.

“My favorite part of working with Judy is her dedication to the [Suzuki] program,” said Garber. “She has contributed so much to the program and I’ve learned so much from her. She is a wonderful, warm, caring individual, and I’ve been lucky to have a colleague like her.”

Leslie Wismatt has been a teaching colleague of Palac since the early 1980s. They worked closely together on the Michigan Chapter of the American String Teachers Association Board of Directors. As a colleague of Palac, Wismatt was a witness of her sharp intellect and creative teaching style.

“Judy has many strengths. For one thing, she is an excellent diagnostician and pedagogue. In addition, she is a wonderful role model and mentor to others,” said Wimsatt, the director of curriculum development at the University of Michigan School of Integrative Medicine and a graduate of the MSU College of Music. “She has a knack for thinking up some of the coolest string student projects that you can imagine. We are all very lucky that she’s teaching with us in Michigan.”

For more information about the CMS Suzuki Program, contact the Community Music School at (517) 355-7661 or visit cms.msu.edu.

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Founded in 1993, the Community Music School is part of the outreach division of the MSU College of Music. The mission of CMS is to provide comprehensive music education – quality instruction, related music services and educational programs – for interested individuals of all ages and levels with financial assistance for those in need.