Benefits and Challenges of Teaching Suzuki Piano Online

I. Introduction

Central fact: Online teaching cannot replicate the energy and immediacy of face-to-face instruction.
Challenge: How to use this rapidly evolving technology during and between lessons to complement or replace face-to-face instruction.

II. Before the lesson

A. Technology 1: recommended equipment

1. reasonably fast internet connection: capable of handling multiple video streams.
2. reasonably up-to-date laptop
3. iPad or other tablet
4. webcam: Logitech C920 HD Pro Webcam: $75 @ B&H photo and elsewhere

B. Technology 2: videoconferencing software

1. Assuming good internet and equipment, best option = at least two streams from teacher and two from student.
2. Skype the default: not recommended.
   Premium pricing for three or more streams.
   Software not as flexible as other options
3. Recommended: Fuze videoconferencing software: fuze.com
   a. free (or $96/year for higher priority in support and some other bells and whistles)
   b. capable of handling 12 simultaneous video streams
   c. with good internet, high quality video
   d. easy to continually resize windows on screen
   e. ability to record video and audio of meeting
   f. 10' to accept meeting invitation

C. Technology 3: scheduling

1. choosing lesson times
   a. favor times when internet traffic is less
   b. be aware of time zones, daylight savings time
2. for busy schedule, consider using an online calendar/ scheduler that adjusts for time zones

III. During the lesson

Crucial point: The parent serves as your hands and supporting voice during the lesson. In online teaching, efficient and effective instruction depends much more on knowledgable parent. In large part, lessons will more closely parallel face-to-face instruction to the extent that the parent is familiar with

- playing the piano
- the Suzuki method
- your teaching approach

NOTE: All of my current and former online parents are accomplished pianists, so I have no direct experience with the minimum pianistic level necessary for a parent to work effectively with the student during the lesson. But I would expect that a parent who does not play should strongly consider studying as well and try to get a running start.

Other considerations

1. Allow time at beginning and end to sign on/sign off; the online "waiting room" is different from that in the studio.
2. Understand that there is a different kind of lesson dynamic: not as immediate and more of the Suzuki triangle
3. Consider an alternative to traditional bow because of logistics (e.g., rearranging the cameras) and lack of immediacy.

IV. Between lessons

At student/parent end: Parent should consider using smartphone to record student playing correctly. Parent and student can then refer to recording during practice periods as necessary

At teacher end:

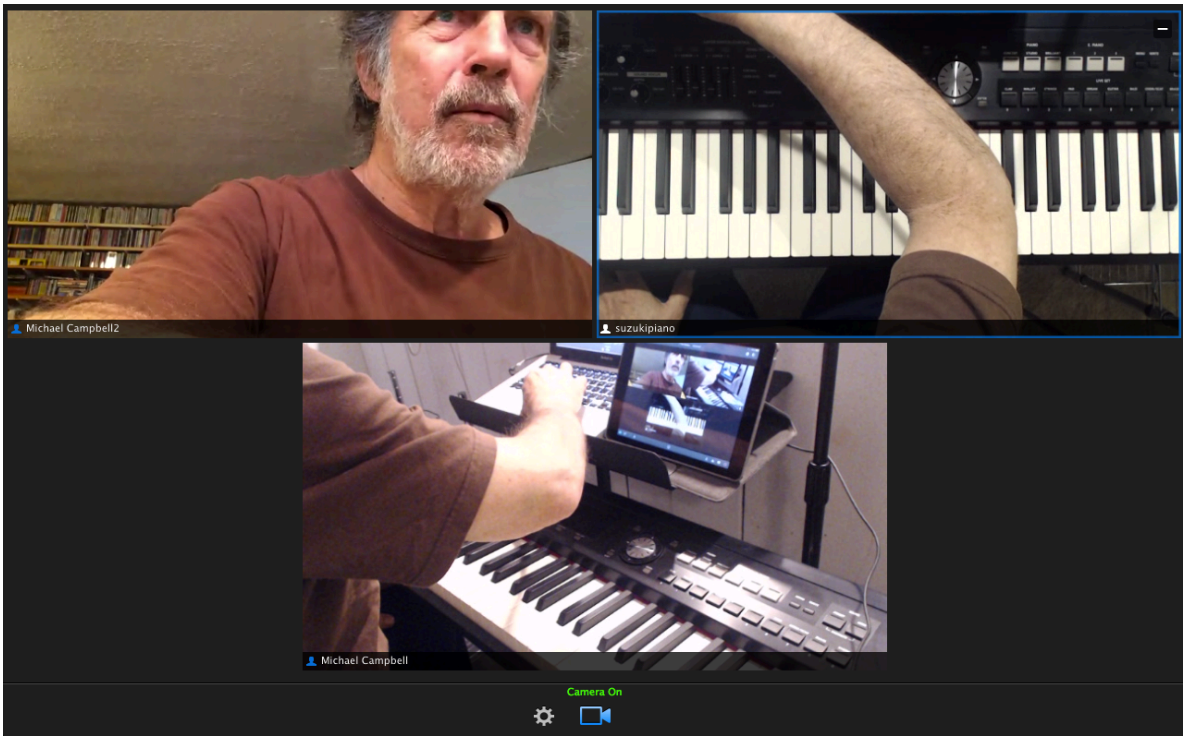
1. develop a set of online supporting materials, e. g.:
   a. video demonstrations of teaching points,
   b. guides to individual pieces,
   c. reading materials
2. Troubleshooting directed toward a particular student via video exchanges

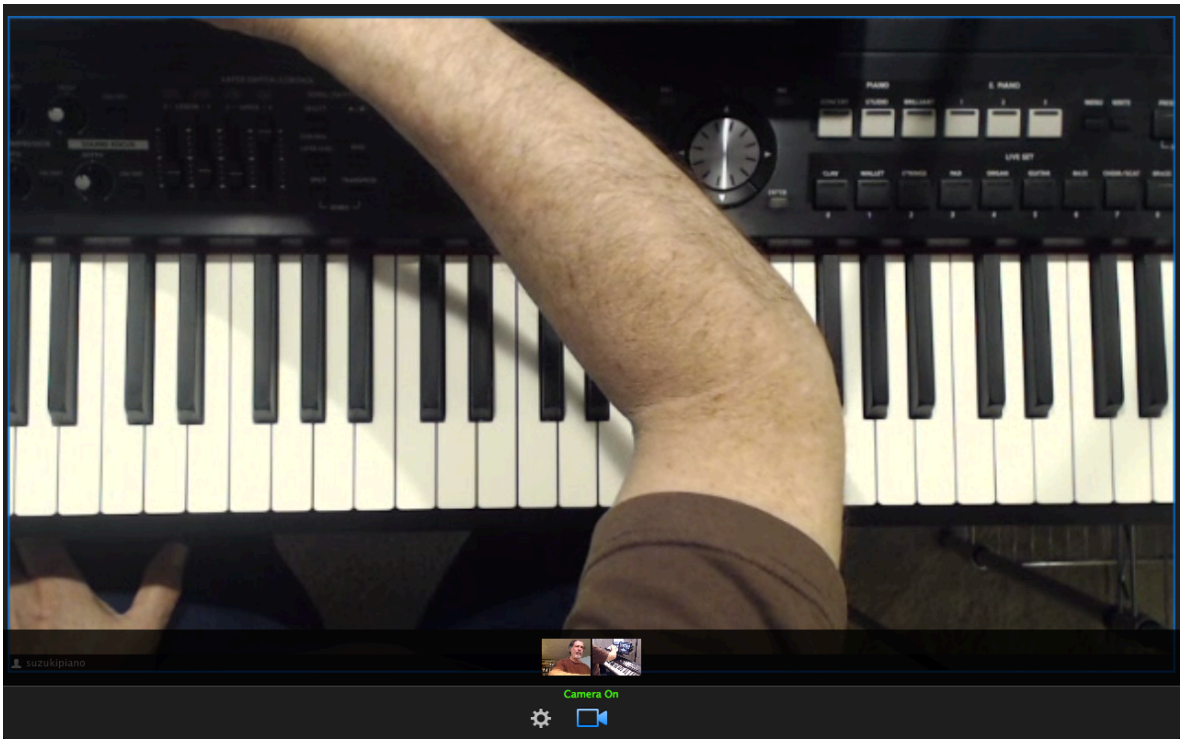
V. Online teaching options

1. Fully online
2. Hybrid instruction: periodic face-to-face lessons alternating with online instruction
3. Online complement to face-to-face instruction, e.g.: video checkin for trouble spot and/or makeup for missed lesson because of illness, etc.

VI. Some advantages of using online technology

1.No travel time for family (or teacher)
2.Multiple images of student and teacher — no need to turn head when you demonstrate
3.Stronger reinforcement of lesson materials via teacher and parent videos
4.More flexible scheduling: possibly do more of your teaching during the day.





Running three video streams simultaneously in Fuze, first with all three windows proportionally, then with two windows minimized. Both of these are full-screen shots images are full-screen shots.