



NEWSLETTER

Music is the language of the heart without words. - S. Suzuki



MESSAGE FROM THE MTSA PRESIDENT

The Middle Tennessee Suzuki Association remains committed to serving our Suzuki community through these unprecedented times. We thank all the teachers and students' families who have maintained active membership this year and hope that we will be able to gather, in person, again soon, in Institutes, Workshops, Recitals & additional performing opportunities.

In 2019, the MTSA made substantial progress with our organization's infrastructure. A new website was created, including a new url, www.middletnsuzuki.org, as well as a new logo and many other helpful features. Behind the scenes, we merged the MTSA finances into Quickbooks & partnered with an educational events company to streamline the registration process for the Fall Workshop.

In 2020, even though the Honors' Recital, the Bacchanalia Festival, the National Anthem at the Sounds game & the Fall Workshop all had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, the MTSA Board continued to meet and continue strategic planning for the future. We were still able to present via Zoom, a Teacher Enrichment event, "Teaching with an Open Heart" with Ed Kreitman & a Fall Fiddle Fest with Crystal Plohman Wiegman for the students. With clear financial accounting, the Board passed a comprehensive budget and revised our organization's By-Laws. We also held the first virtual Annual Meeting, which may become an effective way to communicate with the entire membership, even if/when restrictions begin to lift.

If you are interested in becoming more active and involved in the MTSA, please consider

serving on a committee or joining the Board. We need replacements and future leaders to continue to function and grow. This will ensure that we continue to have volunteers vital to our organization. If this is something you are interested in doing, please send me an email. I would love to connect with you to see how we can work together to help MTSA meet its mission of supporting Suzuki music education in our community."

Deidre Bacco, MTSA President
president@middletnsuzuki.org

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INSTRUMENT EXCHANGE

Violin made by Rodney de Vries
2019 St. Johns, NL
\$10,000 CAD (approximately \$8,000 USD)

To audition this instrument email:
Zachary.ebin@vanderbilt.edu
or call 615 635 9760

If you have an instrument you would
like to list here please
send the listing to:
vicepresident@middletnsuzuki.org

TEACHING WITH AN OPEN HEART

Anne Landis Jetton

This summer, I joined 15 of our MTSA teacher members in a two day online seminar with Ed Kreitman. This was the first seminar I have taken with Ed, and it was great! It was a fantastic, informative and practical guide to energy healing and the principles of energy applied to Suzuki teaching and performance. To begin, we must recognize energy, and then acknowledge where energy is being blocked in a person's playing. One of the first analogies Ed used was the 'garden hose'

analogy for energy in the bow arm. Think about how removing a kink in a garden hose releases energy and makes water flow freely. As this relates to teaching an instrument, we first identify blocks in energy, observing what exactly blocks the student's path to movement in the bow arm.

Daily we work with our students to unblock 'kinks' and release the energy necessary for playing. The garden hose analogy really resonated with me because I had a student with an extremely high bow arm; the shoulder and elbow making its own 'kink' above the violin. Ed's analogy helped me to realize how this block in energy stops the motion in the bow arm. His solution was also energy-related. To remove this block, he instructed, pull the student where you want them to go. Rather than pushing the elbow down, place a hand below and have the student lower the elbow down to your hand. The intent to pull rather than push the elbow releases the block and frees the bow arm. Furthermore, it causes the student to initiate the motion, and the energy follows, flowing freely through the bow arm.

In the second day of the seminar, Ed presented the principles of energy as they apply to performance and introduced the seven realms of conscious awareness. In a full spectrum performance, the player attunes to each of the 7 realms of consciousness: physical, inward emotional, mental, outward emotional, aural, visual and spiritual. All are different fields of energy. An overarching theme of the seminar was that energy follows intention. To help achieve musicality in performance, Ed asks each student to be a tour guide. We can all ask our students to be tour guides and take us where they want to go with their performance. We can help them be intentional about what they want to communicate, and the energy will follow.

These are just a few of the many topics of discussion and I came away with great notes, tips and ideas. Stay tuned for the next online seminar, and renew your membership today to participate in these excellent teacher enrichment opportunities.



THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

Zachary Ebin

Over the many years I spent in teacher training and music education, not once did a teacher bring up the concept of “virtual teaching” or “how to teach online.” Until this past year, this was not a method of instruction that music educators gave much thought. But as of last March, virtual teaching became the principal method most of us were forced to adopt. As my colleagues and I rapidly moved to a virtual teaching platform, the questions amassed. How can we play together online? How can one demonstrate tone? How do we keep children engaged? What about performances? Searching for insight on how to move forward with this new method of teaching, I paradoxically looked to the past. I revisited the central tenets of Suzuki’s philosophy and found insight and encouragement in his ideas written more than 70 years ago.

In his seminal work, *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki examines the way children learn to speak and contends that this is the way we must teach music. In all my pedagogy classes I ask my students to think about the elements of language acquisition and we discuss how those elements can be replicated in music education. During these discussions, I ask my students to imagine a family sitting together when a young toddler utters his or her first word. Many of us have experienced this moment and can easily picture the scene. A child’s first semi-recognizable word is met with cheers, laughter, clapping, and encouragement to do it again. We would never imagine responding to a child’s first utterance of “mama” with, “Very close, but not quite. It is mommy.” We simply celebrate the accomplishment and rejoice. We use pure positivity again and again as our children learn to speak, and over a very short span of time a child goes from zero language ability to fluency. As Suzuki asserts, if we mimic this same positive approach in our

music instruction the results will be remarkable.

2020 was a year of tremendous hardship and so much negativity. Virtual teaching has come with an onslaught of challenges and constraints. Many of our teaching techniques and tools have been limited, and we cannot provide our students with the full gamut of opportunities and training that we could in person. But what we can still give our students, fully and absolutely, is positivity.

Despite the frustrations of this “new normal” we must reflect on all the positive things developing in our virtual studios. Remarkably, some students are doing better musically than ever before. While other extracurricular activities and programming are cancelled, students have more time to practice. With online school, students find themselves with more flexible schedules and the opportunity to practice throughout the day, rather than just at the end of the day when they are less focused and tired. Fewer lessons are being missed due to illness or weather. Students are also becoming more autonomous and learning to become less dependent on their teacher for things like note taking or marking their music. Parents are becoming more engaged and involved as they take a more active role in place of the physical presence of a teacher. The virtual platform has given us a chance to collaborate with programs across the world and allows us to defy the limits of geography in our performances and recitals. Most of all, our students and their parents are developing a heightened appreciation for music and the power it has to carry us.

While frozen computer screens, poor internet connections, and fuzzy sound can drive us mad, we must take time to focus on the positive. As teachers, it is imperative that we carry this positivity into our teaching, and there are a few easy and effective ways to do this.

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POWER OF POSITIVITY continued

As with language acquisition, positive reinforcement goes a long way. Take a moment to acknowledge and praise your students, even for routine things like showing up prepared and being on time. Remind them how great it is that they remain committed to their music studies despite the chaos of life.

When teaching in person, we often express our acclamation through body language or other physical cues. We might lean in when a student is playing a phrase particularly well, or nod approvingly when a student works through a challenging piece. These positive gestures are often lost over the internet. To maintain and buoy this positivity we need to use more conspicuous actions like a visible thumbs-up, or perceptible smile. Take a little more time than you might have in person to comment on a student's playing and what they did well.

Engaging parents in this positivity is also helpful. As parents take a more active part in their child's lesson it is to everyone's benefit to make their engagement as positive as possible. Giving parents a chance to share positive feedback after a student plays is an easy way to give them a voice in the lesson and support their growing role in their child's music education.



While completing my PhD, I had the fortunate opportunity to serve as a teaching assistant for Karen Burke. At the beginning of her first lecture, Professor Burke went around the entire class of 60 students and asked each person their name and then repeated it, as if trying to memorize it. Following the class, I asked Professor Burke why she took so much time out of the lecture to do this. She told me that people love hearing their name, and that addressing students by their name made them more engaged in the class, and more likely to listen. I have found this to be one of the most elementary and powerful tools of positivity in my own teaching. Rather than using second person pronouns, I make an effort to use a student's name when speaking to them. In group class, I use the students' names even more, and encourage the students to also refer to their peers by name. When playing games, I always have students name another student to take the next turn. Following solos, instead of just clapping I have students cheer the soloist by chanting their name. This has been an extraordinarily effective tool for virtual group class teaching, and something I will continue to utilize even when in-person teaching returns.



As the new year begins and hope abounds, let us not despair in the limitations of our virtual teaching. Focus on the good, turn your attention to that which has been gained, and overwhelm your students with positivity. If we can do this, then our students will come out of this year as better players and better people.

MTSA FIDDLE JAM AND PLAY IN PARTY

Sara Johnson

On Sunday, November 15, 2020, MTSA sponsored a free online event for members led by Crystal Plohman Wiegman. Crystal's new "Fiddle and Song" book was the source for sheet music for the Fiddle Jam, and participants started the session with "Cornbread and Butter Beans", an old American tune made popular by the Carolina Chocolate Drops.

Crystal's upbeat, friendly demeanor was encouraging to everyone as we figured out the basic chord structure using pizzicato open strings. We were then guided to build a bowed back-up rhythm using mostly open strings with emphatic off-beats to create a bouncy groove. Soon, we were singing the verses, playing the melody, and learning to take turns with all the dimensions of the music. These are the foundational ideas for participating in a jam, and can lead to a lifetime of musical fun and improvisation.

As we moved to "Little Liza Jane", a longtime favorite of MTSA students, the Advanced Fiddle Break and the Harmony were enthusiastically added to the mix. The Hoedown Tag (Shave and a Haircut) finished up the Fiddle Jam portion in style. The succeeding Play-In Party involved pieces from the Suzuki repertoire, and favorites from Books I - V were suggested and enjoyed.

This event was a happy interlude for our MTSA community on a November afternoon during the isolation and distress of the global pandemic. With her warmth and good humor, Crystal was able to remind us that making music together makes everything better!



MTSA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE MARCH 1ST

Cheri Drummond & Andra Prewett, Scholarship Committee Co-Chairs

Each year, the MTSA offers scholarships for Suzuki training for students and teachers.

- Teachers may apply for a scholarship to attend a Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA) sanctioned Teacher Training Workshop of their choice.
- Students may apply for a scholarship to attend a Suzuki Institute of their choice.

This year, institutes might look a little different. Some will be online, while others will be in person. MTSA Scholarships will be valid for in-person and online institutes. Scholarships are offered both for need-based and merit-based candidates. All candidates must have maintained active membership for at least one year, so be sure you are current on your MTSA dues before applying!

The applications will open on January 15th at www.middletnsuzuki.org/scholarships, and will be due March 1st. Students will need to submit a video performance of a polished piece, a teacher recommendation, and a completed application. Teachers will need to submit an essay and a completed application. Candidates applying for need-based scholarships will also need to submit last year's tax return. For questions, please contact scholarship@middletnsuzuki.org

If you received a scholarship award in 2020 and you would like to redeem your scholarship for 2021, you are required to fill out a new application; however, you will not need to submit an audition video, teacher recommendation, or tax form.

Be sure to visit our website on January 15th to begin your application!

BOOK 1 TRAINING WITH JOANNE MELVIN

Anna Lisa Hoepfinger

In 2019 The Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt began a Suzuki Summer Institute, The Nashville Suzuki Institute, under the direction of Zachary Ebin, the new Suzuki director at Blair. This was great news for our Nashville Suzuki community! I originally completed book one training in 2005 with Michelle Higa George and was eager for a refresher course with Joanne Melvin in Nashville.

Joanne Melvin was very organized in presenting many pre-twinkle games and all the pieces in book one with key teaching points. I appreciated the amount of material she covered so well in a short time. She was also a master of getting incredibly young students to focus. We learned much from observing her daily master classes with a group of 3 and 4 year old students. Each lesson demonstrated the importance to first capture the student's attention and continue to maintain focus throughout the training. Her ability to teach complex tasks like relaxing students' bow holds and producing beautiful sounds was inspiring! She took time to do these tasks every day and broke them down to the students' level. They were learning deeply and taking responsibility for their own learning at such a young age.

Having an institute in your own backyard is wonderful. The Nashville Suzuki Institute is a great place for members of the MTSA to get to know each other. I still keep in touch with new friends from the class. Many of us live in the area and will continue to see each other at gigs or MTSA gatherings. I am looking forward to seeing more of my colleagues and meeting new people at the Nashville Suzuki Institute. I was so thankful to receive a scholarship from the MTSA for my training. The MTSA scholarships are a great opportunity for us to continue our teacher training.

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MTSA Membership Benefits

Whether you're a teacher who enjoys connecting with colleagues, or a Suzuki parent, there are many benefits to being an MTSA member:

For Suzuki Families (\$25/year):

- Subscription to the MTSA newsletter
- Access to free & discounted MTSA events
- Scholarship opportunities for Suzuki Institutes
- Voting privileges

For Suzuki Teachers (\$35/year):

- Listing in our online Teacher Directory
- Subscription to the MTSA newsletter
- Access to free & discounted MTSA events
- Scholarships for Suzuki teacher training
- Connect with other Suzuki teachers
- Voting privileges

For Corporate Members (\$200/year):

- Listing in the directory
- Online advertising with link to your webpage
- Subscription to MTSA newsletter

To join or renew your membership, please visit www.middletnsuzuki.org/membership



BRIAN LEWIS MASTERCLASS

April 11th, 2:00-5:00pm
Open to ALL MTSA Members



Six performers will be selected to perform in the masterclass. To audition please send the student's name, parent's names, and studio teacher name along with a link to an unlisted YouTube video of one piece to vicepresident@middletnsuzuki.org

Eligibility:

Any MTSA student members who study with an MTSA teacher who are in book 3 or above.

Students must play the piece they audition with in the masterclass.

DEADLINE TO AUDITION IS MARCH 5th

More information at: www.middletnsuzuki.org

SUZUKI INSTITUTES

David Lyle

I'm going to serve my opinion straight-up: if your child is studying music in the Suzuki community and you never take her to an institute, you're robbing yourself of a big advantage of Suzuki method. You're spending a lot of time and effort as your child's practice partner every day, yes? That's a lot of prompting, asking and pleading. Wouldn't it be nice to take your little musicians someplace where you (almost) never have to prompt them to play? Let peer pressure be your friend. Let the example of the other kids be the prompt.

Every summer the Suzuki Association of the Americas sponsors about thirty-five summer institutes for a variety of instruments, from violin to guitar to flute or piano. Each typically lasts about four or five days. All are carefully vetted, so you know they embrace Suzuki values and have the highest possible standards for faculty and content. Look at the SAA web site for a complete list of all institutes and their dates. The site has links to the institute web pages, where you can get full details.

www.suzukiassociation.org/events/institutes.

Our family got the institute bug in June 2015 when our violinists, twin girls, were nearly five and had been playing for almost two years. Our family of four went. We all loved it. The next year we visited an institute in a different city. We loved that one too. The third year, we decided to try a third institute and make the trip part of a long family holiday. We did that and loved it, but we couldn't resist also going back to see friends at one of the previous programs. So, year three we attended two institutes. That was even better, so starting year four, we made two institutes per summer a routine.

So far, we've been to institutes in Memphis, Louisville (three times), Los Angeles, the rustic White Mountains of New Hampshire, and, with its debut 2019 season, Nashville.

A major regret about 2020 is that Covid ruined our plans to attend institutes first in Montreal and then Nashville for its second season. We look forward to the next Nashville Suzuki Institute! *continued on page 8*

SUZUKI INSTITUTES continued If you've been to a fall workshop sponsored by Middle Tennessee Suzuki Association, you know about an all-day program that begins with a play-in, ends with a concert and offers a master class, group lesson, ensemble class, a technique class and a craft time. Now imagine a similar routine for five days in row, and you have a good picture of a typical institute.

Plus there's even more time available for kid favorites like social jig-saw puzzle in the corridor, yoga, or an afternoon swim with other Suzuki kids in a campus pool. One institute included a hike in the woods. One invited everyone to an evening professional baseball game where institute students played the national anthem from the field. Another featured dinner aboard a river steamboat with the kids playing Suzuki favorites and fiddle tunes as the entertainment. Often, evening guest artists perform for the whole community. It's all a chance to make music-making social and sociable.

Give your little cellist a chance to show other kids he has mastered everything right through "Rigadoon." Give your Book 4 violist a chance to really rock it out with a viola choir. Our twin girls had their first orchestra experience at an institute playing a number called "The Tell-Tale Heart." Orchestra offered a chance to put new note-reading skills to use. From their point of view, it let them hang with cool kids and learn a creepy tune. My Frances loved it so much, she was still playing her spooky second violin part a year later when friends came over for play dates. Practice and focus have been renewed at home after each week of making music with peers.

Without exception, we've met remarkable teachers at each institute. They're all trained in the Suzuki philosophy that every child can develop musical expression and that you teach the child, not the piece.

They all understand your goal is to equip your child with skills for expression so she can develop a beautiful heart and be

a complete person. Some have had decades of experience teaching based in this philosophy. At institute, your child experiences these remarkable teachers during a master class for fifty minutes each day for a whole week.

Yet institute is non-competitive. For instance, at the 2019 Nashville institute, our two kids studied with Amanda Schubert in master class. Ms. Schubert is truly a gentle and loving teacher. My Frances says the thing about violin playing that she most remembers from that summer is that she doesn't need to feel bad or say "I'm sorry" if she makes a mistake. She remembers that Ms. Schubert told her everyone makes mistakes when playing. It's okay and often the only way you learn.

At institute you form bonds with teacher "grandparents". My girls love their home teacher, Sarah Coté. They sometimes talk about how they got to study with their "grandmother" teacher, their teacher's teacher, Carol Dallinger, at the MTSA fall workshops. At institutes, they've studied with at least three distinguished, senior faculty, Marilyn O'Boyle, Brice Farrar and Amanda Schubert, who were able to talk about their many months of study with Shinichi Suzuki himself decades ago in Japan. (In every case, their take away seems to be: be patient; remember it's about teaching character, not making virtuosos; be flexible; always be ready to try something new.)

More than once, it's been helpful for both my kids and me to hear the same practice ideas from another excellent teacher. When they were book one Allegretto students, my girls' institute teacher, Marilyn O'Boyle, demonstrated, as we'd seen at home, how to play staccato and how that bow stroke lets the young player keep to the middle of the bow and listen after each note for a ringing pitch. She pointed out how Dr. Suzuki designed most of his book one literature to be staccato. That was to help a young player delay the complicated project of coordinating shoulder, fore and upper arms and wrists

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SUZUKI INSTITUTES continued that is needed to play long bows while still making a beautiful sound. Better to play staccato and listen after each pitch to hear if it rings. Not ringing? Then it's also not in tune. It was an aha moment for me. I had heard some version of this for months, but it took institute for me to grasp that I would do my kids a favor if I reminded them to just play short, ringing notes in the middle of the bow for now.

Likewise, little ones begin to think maybe they should take the suggestions about their bow hold seriously. Intermediate players hear the good advice about shoulder posture from another voice and realize their teacher at home is not just some crazy shoulder-zealot. Advanced musicians thrive by hearing old ideas from a new perspective.

Institutes give parent support you'll be glad to have. You'll meet other parents who have struggled with combining daily practice for several kids with work schedules and dinner prep. You can talk with other parents at lunch, during breaks and while your kids are in group rehearsals or while you wait for lectures to begin.

Many of our institutes have included lectures from distinguished, even famous teachers from across North America. When I see other parents taking notes, I know who to buttonhole during coffee and donut break about getting my kid to do the hardest part of practice — start!

When I recently asked my ten year olds what they like about institute, they both got very excited about “meeting a whole lot of other kids who also play violin” and “meeting kids from all over the country, and even the world, who also have to practice every day and know what it's like.”

At institute, your kid and you will look forward to having lunch with other Suzuki kids and their practice partners. Your kids will beg to go with their new musician friends to the playground during the break or to run ahead to order lunch together.

It's another chance for practice partners to compare notes. As the kids get tacos or play on the monkey bars, they see themselves as normal musicians, just like their perfectly normal friends who also practice every day and care about a well-tuned fifth. Our wonderful Nashville institute is special precisely because it's in our home town, and even for families visiting from farther afield, there's a wealth of affordable hotels within an easy drive of its Blair School home. We've also enjoyed institutes at rustic, even remote sites. Some embrace a summer camp atmosphere where everyone (or very nearly) comes from a hundred miles away or more and stays in rustic cabins (or maybe more luxuriously at the Hampton Inn down the road). In those settings, it's been a boon to make new friends with other Suzuki families at breakfast, lunch, dinner, during hot cocoa on the lawn at the end of the day, and during a morning swim in the camp lake.

At institute, you will marvel at how your tot who last week couldn't focus for five minutes can now concentrate for five hours straight (hint: it's the other nine kids in the room); at how quickly your little musician makes new friends; at how much they advance in skill and knowledge in just five days; at how proud you are during the final concert. Be ready to comfort your little one when they tell you they're sad now that the week is over.

Our girls know they're lucky to have Suzuki friends from around the country. Yesterday, we listened to the Zoom recital pieces of institute friends in Boston, Baltimore and Louisville. Even as I type here by my Christmas tree in Nashville, my cell phone rang with a FaceTime call for my ten-year old from her little friend Daphne, a young violinist in Los Angeles. My daughter is so excited for this chance to talk to her violin friend. I think she's going to go practice in a few minutes when I say it's time. Let peer pressure be your friend too.