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South African Suzuki Association Newsletter

October 2013

Preliminary Board Meeting

On Saturday 31 August SASA held an open meeting to discuss the formation of a new SASA Board, NPO registration and how to seek support from donors. As a result of invitations sent out to SASA members, members of the community and invitations given via word of mouth, two interested individuals attended the meeting, two Suzuki parents volunteered their services and many others showed their support. Lauryan Ritzlmayr has volunteered to create a website for SASA, Sara Nagy has joined the SASA Newsletter editorial team, Bertha Spies has shown her gracious support and Ushama Jerrier has given renewed direction to NPO registration and future financial support for the Association. SASA extends thanks to all families, members of the community and teachers for their support.

Durban Suzuki School

Louise Howell

I have taught the violin at Durban Girls' College (DGC), a private school on the Berea, since 1998. I started with seven pupils. I now have over fifty.

As part of the curriculum at DGC, every Grade 2 pupil learns the recorder, violin, percussion and singing for one term. The following year the pupils may choose to continue privately with one of these disciplines. This year I have twenty Grade 3 violinists whom I teach in one group. In order to teach a large group I created a pre-Twinkle program.

We learn a new piece every week. Needless to say, the pieces are very simple and repetitive – using Suzuki's brilliant principal of "success orientated steps" in action. The children love getting something new every week. They concentrate very well AND we have a lot of fun! By the third term they learn Twinkle in one lesson.

My pupils in Senior Primary (Grade 4 to 7) and High School (Grade 8 to 11) see me twice a week, either for two group lessons, as in the case of my eight Grade 4's, or for one individual and one group lesson as in the case of the seven Grade 5 to 7 pupils. Of my nine High School pupils, four are Book 3 pupils who are also working towards the Trinity Grade 3 exam, three are working towards the Trinity Grade 6 exam, and the other two recently completed Trinity Grade 7. High School pupils (and parents) want to go the exam route resulting in Suzuki Books 6,7 and 8 taking second place. Unfortunately, Durban cannot bring up advanced players to the Annual Suzuki Concert. From a teaching point of view, although the repertoire is different, I apply the same steps that are covered in the Suzuki Books.

I aim for every child to play in a concert every term, but usually have two or three short concerts.

Progress is much faster for the children who attend lessons with a parent. I am looking forward to quicker progress now that I am able to apply the teaching in a purer Suzuki manner.



Suzuki South Africa Cello Teacher Training

The Suzuki cello teachers training course started on the 6th August 2013 in Pretoria at Annarie's home studio. Annarie, Natalie and Warda attended the course and Ruben Riviera from Paris was our trainer.

What a splendid time we had! There was lots of laughter, fun and excitement despite the fact that we worked hard on the Suzuki teachers training method for Suzuki book 1. We started the day off with warming up exercises and worked gradually through pre-twinkle preparatory exercises, bow technique, left hand positions, articulation and form analyses of each piece.

We had lots of questions and discussions on the teaching and learned a lot from one another through the week.

We gave individual lessons to Annarie's pupils while Ruben observed. Ruben played Cello games with the children and we had so much fun.

The week went by quickly and each of us are looking forward to the next teachers training course in January 2014.

Ruben is a fantastic cello educator and mentor.



Suzuki Violin Level 1 Training Feedback

Melissa Witbooi

When I first started my level 1 training I was very excited but nervous because I didn't know what to expect from the Suzuki Course. After day one, my brain was completely exhausted but so full of the precious knowledge I had received. This course is teaching me how to teach, how to play, and help my students in a way I never thought possible. It has opened up my eyes to new ways and methods of doing things. It has brought such freshness to my approach and dealing with students and parents. I wish I could have learnt all this in my first year of my Music degree. The insight and brilliance of this method is a wonderful way for all children to learn.



Revised Suzuki Violin - Volume 6 - Available

- Tonalisation exercises in higher positions plus an updated "Annie Laurie" with position work
- Sixth Position Etude and the Perpetual Motion
- Two-octave F Major Scale and arpeggios in position Preparatory exercises for La Folia
- A Two-octave B Minor scale and arpeggios prior to the Handel D Major Sonata
- New musical terms and composers

The Joy We Find as a Family in the Suzuki Music Method.

By: Lauryan (Book 1B), mom to: Aiden, 6 (Book 1B), Nathan, 4 (Book 1A), Dylan, 2 (pre-twinkler)

Music has always been a big part of our family – even before we had children. And when our oldest child, Aiden (then 4), begged us for violin lessons after seeing his best friend play her violin, we knew that above all else we needed a music program that would nurture our children at the same time as teaching them to make beautiful music. After speaking to the mom of Aiden's friend we chose to start Suzuki Violin lessons. Our younger two boys went with to the lessons out of necessity mostly, until eventually about a year later Nathan, then 3, asked for lessons too. Once both boys had their own instruments, we found that our then-toddler Dylan kept trying to play with their instruments, refusing the cute box violin that I lovingly created for him. (At this stage he had already been humming many of the book 1 tunes during feeds, to put himself to sleep, or for general self-soothing). Our amused teacher helped us find a very small 1/64th size and so Dylan started "learning" on the instrument that was already such a big part of his life before he turned 2. Shortly thereafter, my children found it amusing when I decided to start learning too.

As you can imagine, trying to get three active boys through daily practice while trying to squeeze in time for myself to practice, is not always easy. Some days it works well and we all have wonderful practice sessions. Other days, we consider it a practice if we can get a single bow done with violins tucked under the arm. Life is busy and the kids are busier and it seems as though there is always something that needs to be done. I have found that when we fill our busy lives around the edges with great music, everyone is calmer, more relaxed, kinder, and more productive.

For me, the thing that stands out above everything else in the Suzuki method of music, is the way it helps create a love of music and a joy of learning. Because we try and follow Shinichi Suzuki's ideals, we always follow our children's desires to play their instruments. I have come to realize that it is more beneficial for my children to enjoy hearing the CD or seeing me practice with an excited smile than it would be for me to force them to practice amidst threats and yells of mutiny. As we get more comfortable in following our children's leads, we find our practices becoming more and more fun, and even Dad joins in, humming the songs, singing note names and laughing as the children try and teach him to play "Twinkle" Variations on their instruments. Grandparents are willing audiences for impromptu practices and mini concerts and family and friends are eager to hear the latest progress. And so more than nurturing just our children, the Suzuki way of learning music has nurtured our entire family – bringing us closer together through the creation and learning of beautiful music.

Suzuki Workshop

Andrea Kreuiter

The SASA had a very successful violin workshop under the guidance of Karen Kimmitt who came all the way from Canada for this special event.

The Workshop took place on the 6th and 7th of July. Children from 3 years old up to adults came to learn together. The main purpose of this workshop was to learn and work on the repertoire for our upcoming National Concert.

After two days of intensive practise (and lots of fun in between) we had a small concert to end this workshop. The African medley was an absolute highlight! "Die Boere het gery", "die bobbejane het geklim" and Jan Pierewiet had his coffee. The Township kids are still singing about the "lastige" bobbejaan. If the little kids are naughty, they are said to be "lastige bobbejane".

Another highlight was the Orchestra. I was amazed when I heard what the children had accomplished in such a short time. I am sure Schubert himself was also smiling.

This whole event was made possible with the help of the Suzuki teachers who not only helped with the organising but did a lot of teaching, kept the children together, made hot dogs, and did the dirty dishes.

We are also very thankful for the UNISA Music Foundation who sponsored 30 township children's participation.

Brescia House School provided us a lovely venue. One of the township children fondly said he can see it is a school for girls because there were no broken windows and it was very clean.

Ensemble

Joanna Swart

The SASA Senior Ensemble held its premier performance at the Annual National Concert held on 27 July. The ensemble's eight members are Daniel Seleka, Nina Nathanson, Unjoo Kim, Shamel Seleka, Abigail Kyffin, Hyukjoo Kim, Ane Greyling, and Rumi-Anne Seleka. After monthly rehearsals with coaching from Andrea Kreuiter, Joanna Swart, and Madeleine Wikner they performed Cannon in D by J. Pachelbel. Many were touched and inspired by their performance. The teachers look to the future for more performance opportunities and wish to continue to build the ensemble's ability, repertoire, and reputation in the community. Well done, SASA Ensemble! And bravo to the parents who travel for rehearsals!

National Concert

Andrea Kreuter

This event took place on the 27th of July at Brescia House School.

After the workshop and an extra rehearsal on the Sunday before the concert, the children were in top form. This was one of the best prepared and biggest concerts ever. There were about 180 children participating. It is difficult to pinpoint the highlight of the concert because every piece presented was a work of art. The following items were; however, the most outstanding:

The pre-twinkle group was adorable and they sparkled like little stars (they were also a bit lively – one bow and a violin didn't survive the event). The senior ensemble played the Pachelbel Canon beautifully – one of the children wondered if they could buy the CD. Some parents suggested to make it part of the Suzuki repertoire and they want their children to play it in the future.

What came as a surprise was the last piece in the program where the children glowed in the dark while playing the Twinkle Variations. (Maybe parents can use this as a practice motivation. For example, suggesting to the children that after they have played their variations a certain number of times correctly they can do it glowing in the dark!)

Many thanks to all the teachers, parents and children who worked so hard to make this most wonderful event possible.



Feedback from the National Concert:

Aletheia (age 5 years), student of Lucia Seleka, said her favourite part of the concert was, in this order, "Playing violin, the cupcakes and watching the orchestra."

The Most Natural Way to Learn – The Suzuki Method

Betsie Meyer

The Suzuki method is also known as the “Mother tongue” method. Children learn the instrument in the same way as they learn to speak their mother language. By listening, observing, and repeating word by word (sound by sound) building their repertoire and ability step by step.

This way of learning enables everyone (also differently abled children) to master an instrument. As listening is so important it works excellently in the townships. These children come from cultures where stories and music are learned and spread by word of mouth. Things were seldom written down. The street children depend on their listening and observing skills to survive. These children are “wired” for the Suzuki approach. On a practical level, we don’t need a lot of music books and music stands to begin lessons with.

Individual and Community Power

Music in the township environment is also seen as a social event. They work excellent in groups. They have already the ability to tune in to their community and adapt musically in a group situation. Because music is experienced as a cultural event where people are linked in a safe, caring, and loving situation it is easy to bring the Suzuki philosophy and way of learning to them.

These children use their skills to bring joy and happiness in their community. They play at weddings, funerals, and for all their sponsors. This method not only adds to their individual well-being but also serves the whole community.

There is no discrimination

This method gives everyone the opportunity to learn and grow. It doesn’t matter what your cultural background, social status, or so-called abilities are. The student can grow and develop in a lovely and caring human-being. Music through the Suzuki method is available for every ear and every human to enjoy.

The Suzuki Method in South Africa

Madeleine Wikner

Introduction

In 1945, Shinichi Suzuki began the Talent Education Movement in Matsumoto, Japan; after years of intense observation of children. “Man is the Son of his environment”, he exclaimed and he said that it is the conditions of that environment that shape the core of his ability. Today, Suzuki teacher training centres are established in most European countries as well as in Canada and the Americas. Seventy percent of students who apply to Conservatoires and Music Schools in America are Suzuki or ex-Suzuki students which accounts for a very high level of teaching. The prestigious Julliard School of Music in New York offers Suzuki pedagogy as a compulsory first year study course. In 2001, an intensive Suzuki-teacher programme was started in Johannesburg and now we have training in Cape Town in violin and cello with the possible addition of piano in the near future.

Personal History

I joined the training programme in 2002. Way back, in 1969, after finishing school, my teacher Pierre de Groote (Belgian), who taught at the College of Music in Rondebosch, Cape Town, said to me: “Madeleine, why don’t you go to Japan and study with Dr Suzuki?” Unfortunately I was a bit short of money at the time, but De Groote was well informed and told me many interesting aspects and gave me a book on the Suzuki Method which I still have. Many years of orchestra playing followed and with the demise of the PACT and SABC orchestras, teaching became a priority.

For the next 10 years my training in the Suzuki Method was continuous and intensive. I was teaching full-time at Pro Arte Alphen Park in Pretoria, and the school gave me full support. In 2011, I passed Level 5 which enabled me to teach Books One to Ten. It was my good fortune to have two outstanding pedagogues, Christophe Bossuat from Lyon, France and Karin Kimmett from Montreal, Canada. Some of the happiest hours of my life were spent observing these two master-teachers working with children, knowing that they themselves had known and trained with Dr. Suzuki at the very time my dear teacher wanted me to go to Japan!

Experience of Suzuki-in-action

As the focus of learning is so very much on Mother Child Teacher one is made aware of how a family, as the basis of a community, functions well. Even in cases where there is family dysfunction or ruptures, the close-knit structure of the South African Suzuki Association provides a larger family to support and help each other. And therein lies its future. As we face a Brave New World, let it please be with children in South Africa and all over the world making music together.

What a good thought!

The New SASA and Its Organisational Structure

SASA needed to revise its constitution once again as the NPO office still required minor revisions to the constitution for it to be acceptable for NPO registration. Advised by Judge Neels Claassen, who assisted in drawing up the second amended constitution, SASA decided to legally dissolve the old SASA and transfer all assets and proceeds to the new SASA with the new constitution in place. The old SASA dissolved on Saturday 2 November 2013. The new SASA was established with immediate effect on the same day and the new constitution signed off.

Please take note of the following important changes in the new constitution:

1. A-and B members (e.g. qualified Suzuki teachers as well as teachers in training) are voting members. C-members (parents, students and other interested individuals) are non-voting members.
2. A parents committee will be established, who will represent the voice of the C-members. The parents committee have voting rights.
3. SASA will be governed by a Board, which will subdivide amongst the following committees with their responsibilities listed:

Board	Committee/category	Persons	Responsibilities	Meetings
	Management Committee	Chairperson, Deputy chairperson, Country Director, Deputy Country Director, Treasurer, Secretary	Administration Finance Fundraising and Advertising Memberships Newsletter Website Liaising with ESA	Once per month
	Teachers Committee	Qualified Suzuki teachers and teachers in training	Concerts Workshops Suzuki Saturdays Graduation Concert	Depending on dates of events
	Teacher Training Committee	Qualified Suzuki teachers	Organise teacher training courses Liaise with teacher trainers Recruit trainees	Depending on Teacher Training dates
	Parents Committee	Parents	Represent parents and C-members Assist management and teachers committees Oversee catering at events	Once every two months or as they feel fit
	Community project Committee	Teachers teaching in community projects and interested individuals	Fundraising for community projects	TBC

Board	Committee/category	Persons	Responsibilities	Meetings
	Western Cape Committee	Suzuki teachers and trainees in WCape	Administration Finance Fundraising Memberships WCape events Liaise with management committee	At least once every 6 weeks
	KZN Representative	Louise Howell, Suzuki teacher	Memberships in KZN Events in KZN Liaise with management committee	N/A
	Other Board members	Parents or interested individuals from the community	Visionary input and ideas Contacts and connections Assist in decision making process	Once a year at AGM

If any person feels they would like to contribute to SASA by serving on one of the committees or on the Board, please contact one of the teachers or write an email to suzuki.association.sa@gmail.com. For any questions regarding SASA's new constitution please contact SASA Chairperson, Maria Meyer at maria.meyer32@gmail.com.

“The fate of a child is in the hands of his parents.”

Dr Shinichi Suzuki

