

S P R I N G 2 0 1 9



# Arizona Suzuki Association

Newsletter



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## The Elephant in the Room and How to Eat the Elephant

by Mary Wilkening, MA, ASA Board Member and Suzuki Cello Teacher

Have you heard the parable of three blind men who encounter an elephant for the first time? The first man says, "The elephant is like a snake." The second man says, "The elephant is like a tree trunk." The third man says, "The elephant is like a wall." All of the men the men thought they had touched different animals while in fact they had all felt a different part of the same animal.

Continued on pages 2-3

## Save the Date!

- May 31-DBacks Game
- June 12-15 Chaparral Suzuki Academy
- October 18-19 Fall Workshop

## The Elephant in the Room and How to Eat the Elephant, cont. from page 1

For parents of students starting out in music lessons, the experience can seem like blindly encountering an elephant. Their own experience may have been in a dance class or on a sports team. For both of these experiences, a child signs up for the class or team, shows up for scheduled events with the required gear. The children feel proud of their accomplishments and the parents can take pictures and post them on Facebook. When the Suzuki teacher starts talking about supervised practice at home, the parent may be surprised. What have I signed up for? I don't know how to play the violin or cello! I am not a musician!

The good news is that in learning to play an instrument, students still need to show up at lessons with the appropriate gear.

Parents can still feel proud of their child's accomplishments and can still take pictures and post them on Facebook, but families need to do more to insure a successful experience. Here are some positive suggestions for music students of all ages from Winifred Crock, an award-winning teacher from St. Louis County, Missouri, in a hand-out called

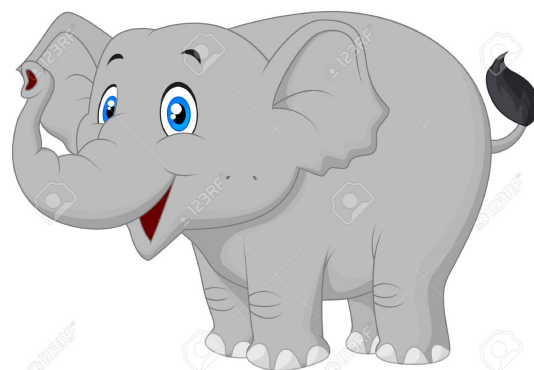
### *Helpful Hints to Assist Your Child's Progress in Strings* by Winifred Crock

1. **DO** provide the best quality instrument and accessory equipment appropriate for the level, including bow, strings, music, case, music stand, etc.
  2. **DO** share your child's enjoyment in both practice and performance situations. React positively, honestly, and with enthusiasm. Praise is especially deserving if a job is well done, a song well played, or a consistent effort made.
  3. **DO** help your child plan a regular, uninterrupted practice schedule. Skills are built gradually a little bit at a time. 15 minutes a day is much better than 2 hours at the end of the week. Daily practice=Daily homework.
  4. **DO** listen to your child play and practice whenever possible. Encourage repetition of "old" pieces to develop better tone and musicianship and to develop a repertoire of pieces he/she knows well. Encourage careful practice of new pieces.
  5. **DO** provide an environment conducive to good practicing. (Positive attitude, enough light, quiet, no distractions, music stand, etc.) Violinists should stand when playing.
  6. **DO** provide an environment of the best quality listening experiences available – [MP3's], CD's and live performances of classical music. Your child needs to have a good model of playing to imitate. The rate of progress can be doubled if listening is done regularly. It is especially important to listen to recordings of the current pieces.
  7. **DO** encourage appropriate group experiences which are socially and musically satisfying to your child. [Group lessons, youth orchestras, Suzuki Camps and chamber music camps to name a few.] Encourage Mini-Concerts at home.
  8. **DO** teach your child to patiently work for progress towards perfection.
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9. **DO** take your child to performances and concerts of his/her instrument: [In Arizona the Phoenix Symphony, the West Valley Symphony, the Symphony of the Southwest, Tucson Symphony or Flagstaff Symphony offer professional quality. Performances of local youth orchestras or school concerts are also great experiences.]
  10. **DO** attend your child's concerts and lessons. Ask questions if you don't understand something.
  11. **DO** enjoy music for its own aesthetic beauty rather than make competition the prime motivation. MUSIC IS AN ART, NOT A SPORT!

## The Elephant in the Room and How to Eat the Elephant, cont. from page 1&2

If parents consider all these helpful hints, the complex job of playing an instrument will come into focus and the student and parents will see how all the separate parts work together and make a successful endeavor.

To continue my metaphor of learning an instrument being like an elephant, consider the joke about "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer is "Take one bite at a time." A young child can learn to play an instrument but it does take a long time and a lot of productive work at home. Every day counts in the process. Young children have the time, but to eat this elephant they have to take small bites every day. When students begin at an older age, they have to take bigger bites every day. As Dr. Suzuki used to say, "After you have practiced a bow hold 10,000 times, you may have almost mastered it." When students and parents take to heart what the teacher suggests and work on it conscientiously step by step, those 10,000 repetitions can be accomplished. When students and parents follow



Winifred Crock's Helpful Hints, who knows, this elephant may even taste like a cookie!

### Arizona Suzuki Strings and Voice Students Play the National Anthem!



Join Suzuki Strings and Voice students on May 31 to perform the  
National Anthem  
at the Diamondbacks vs. Mets Game!

Please contact Kari Weldon if you are interested:  
[weldonkv@gmail.com](mailto:weldonkv@gmail.com)

Rehearsal dates, tickets, and event details to come.



### News from Around the State Chaparral Suzuki Academy

Chaparral Suzuki Academy, for Suzuki violin, viola, cello, piano students. June 12-15, 2019 in beautiful Prescott, Arizona. Join us at Arizona's only SAA approved Suzuki summer institute. [chaparralsuzuki.com](http://chaparralsuzuki.com)



**STRING INSTRUMENT CARE**

By Laura Tagawa, ASA President and Violin Teacher

The following tips are recommended to keep your string instrument in the best possible condition. Many of the suggestions can be done by advanced students or parents.

**Temperature-** Try and keep your instrument in a stable temperature. When transporting, never leave in a hot car. Keep case out of direct sunlight. Rapid changes of temperature cause string instruments to go out of tune and can cause cracks.

**Strings-** It is recommended to change your strings once per year. Use the best quality of strings possible. Wind the strings neatly close to the pegbox. For violin, when ordering strings, you need to know the correct type of e string to fit your fine tuner(s), either loop or ball end. Strings also come in different gauges (thickness), in general use medium gauge. It is important to know the best brand, gauge, and e string type (violin) for your instrument. Ask your teacher for recommendations.

**Bow-** Be sure to tighten your bow before playing and loosen your bow after playing. Rosin your bow every other day. Rosin comes in different types (light, dark), ask your teacher for recommendations. If possible, rehair your bow once a year at your local string shop or repair person.

**Fine tuner-** Check fine tuners often, if turned all the way down, they may scratch the top of your instrument. To fix when turned down, loosen one fine tuner at a time, then tighten the peg and tune.

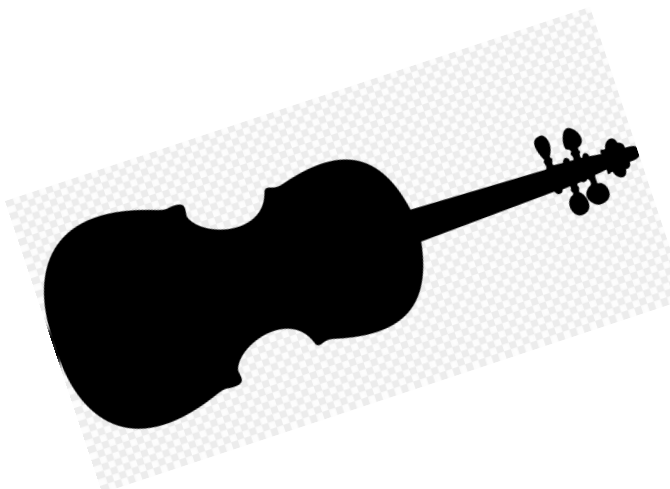
**Pegs-** When changing your strings, apply peg compound such as Hills on each peg. Wind the strings closely to the pegbox and push in slightly as winding. It is possible to wind them too tight, but if too loose the peg will slip.

**Bridge-** Check often that your bridge is straight. If it is leaning toward the fingerboard, you need to pull it back to prevent warping. Always support the weak part of the bridge (the middle) when adjusting. If it is your first time adjusting a bridge, ask your teacher for help.

**Cleaning/Polish-** Daily, wipe off your instrument and strings with a soft, clean cloth. Occasionally, clean with a string instrument cleaner or polish, use only a very small amount.

**Chinrest (Violin & Viola)-** Check that the chinrest is secure. If loose, tighten with chinrest key or large paperclip.

**General Checkups-** It is recommended to have a luthier or repair person look at your instrument once a year to check for open seams, cracks, and proper alignment.

**ASA Fall Workshop!**

Save the Date: October 18 & 19, 2019  
Fall Workshop with guest teachers Winifred Crock (violin), Mary Beth Tyndall (cello), and Taylor Morris (fiddle).

# Parents as Partners

By Megyn Neff, ASA Board Member and Violin Teacher

Parents as Partners 2019 has been releasing short videos from well-respected Suzuki teachers since January. These are 5-15 minutes of wisdom, akin to a TED talk or short podcast, on philosophy, technique, practice tips, child development, and other miscellaneous thoughts that we often encounter as parents and teachers. Most of them take an honest approach to typical struggles that pop up as a practice parent, and approach these struggles with support, positivity, and real, concrete tools to help tackle them. And although I'm not a Suzuki parent, I find these talks give me new ideas for my own "bag of tricks" as a teacher, as well as more insight into what my studio parents experience at home and how I can better support them. This year, the PAP videos run through October 19th, so there is still plenty of time, and there are already 70 talks posted with additions every week. Here are a few previews:

**"Making Failure Impossible" by Heather Watson Hardie: Posted 3/18/19, 14 min.**

Hardie's talk with the intriguing title did not disappoint. Her thesis: Behavior issues in a private or practice lesson can manifest from a lack of belief within the child that they can do something correctly. They might act out because *not* doing what they are asked is something that they *can* do. Her tactic: Change the way we frame assignments as challenges, explorations, and experiments. Attempts and honest efforts equal successes, and therefore the failure rate is 0%. As one of many example, instead of asking a child to do an exercise 5 times in a row, frame as a challenge or exploration: "How many times do you think you could do "X" exercise with "Y" correct technique in 1 minute?" The expectation is concrete, and there is no room for failure, therefore the child can celebrate a success. She gives real-world tools for empowering children who might need a little extra, including how to give choices, creating desire to practice, showing progress, how to keep practice and lessons positive, and how to eliminate the possibility to fail. There is no transcript available for this video, but it is worth the view.

**"Winning the War on Robots" & "Robots #1-10" by David Strom: Posted Dec-April, 2-4 mins each.**

Strom presents a series of short videos in which he categorizes ten different "Suzuki robots," who are all typical students in one way or another. There are so many different aspects of practicing an instrument that students can neglect, tune out, or develop bad habits around. Strom presents ten common neglectful habits and gives them clever names. He then briefly discusses how to identify them, what the causes tend to be, and exercises on how to bring them back into focus. Entertaining, insightful, and practical!

**"Ages and Stages of Parent-Child Communication" by Christine Goodner: Posted 2/4/19, 12 min.**

Goodner surveys the most effective way to communicate with your child as a parent practice partner, from preschool to high school. She has experienced all three corners of the Suzuki triangle as a student from the age of 3, parent to two Suzuki students, and full-time teacher. She focuses on healthy, supportive communication, and highlights how the role and involvement of the practice parent changes throughout a child's development. Goodner presents these changes in an informed, yet personable manner. Transcript with resources included!

**"Squirrely Ones—Parts 1 & 2, by Annie Barley Givler: 3/25/19 and 4/1/19, 10 & 12 mins.**

No sense beating around the bush. Your child might be that one "squirrely friend" in group class or during the practice lesson. Parts 1 and 2 of this talk is a must. I sometimes wonder if Suzuki were alive today, what sorts of contemporary research on development and behavior would he align with, and how would that shape his practical teacher training today? Barley Givler presents research that aligns with Suzuki's Every Child Can philosophy, even for the squirrely kids. She talks about behavioral studies and research addressing maladaptive behavior that is inclusive, positive, and supportive, with real-life strategies for teaching self-advocacy and self-regulation with children as young as age 4. Very interesting, and only audio so you can listen like a podcast.

**ECC! In Tucson**

Arizona Cello Teacher Trainer Alice Vierra taught Every Child Can! (ECC) In Tucson at the University of Arizona's Fred Fox School of Music on February 2, 2019. The class was attended by 29 participants from Tucson, Phoenix, Yuma, Flagstaff, California, and Colorado. ECC is the introductory course covering the Suzuki philosophy of teaching. ECC serves as the first course in the Suzuki Association of the Americas Teacher Development Program. Thanks to all who attended and to Alice for teaching the full class!



ECC participants in  
Tucson



Teacher Trainer Alice Vierra

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