

# Arizona Suzuki Association

## Newsletter



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### Upcoming Events

\*Fall Round-Up-

September 26, 2020

\*ECC online with Alice Vierra-  
Spring 2021

## Building a Jigsaw Puzzle

Mary Wilkening, ASA Board Member, Cello



Have you ever put together a giant 1000 jigsaw puzzle? If you have, you know that it is a daunting task to pour out all the pieces and not know where to begin. Even if you have a picture of the finished puzzle, you have to figure out a system to place each piece to make it look like the picture.

As I watched a 4-year old nephew and a 7-year old niece work on such a puzzle with their mother in July, it occurred to me that learning an instrument is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. The finished picture is the reference recording of the piece. It is the model of what you are trying to accomplish. The system of placing the pieces is like the Suzuki method of learning. The first step is looking for the edge pieces so you can make a frame for your puzzle. I can't imagine doing a puzzle without starting with the frame. The Suzuki frame is *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star and Variations* and all the activities that build the outline and preparation for playing. My niece and nephew could identify the edge pieces and start putting together the puzzle.

Cont. on page 2

***Building a Jigsaw Puzzle, cont. from page 1***

Just like they took pride in forming the frame for the puzzle with guidance, they could learn the parts of Twinkle and start building the ability to play a song with guidance. But, after the frame, there was a long way to go until the puzzle was finished. At 4 and 7, I can only imagine the frustration if we adults left them to put the other 900 pieces together without help!

My niece and nephew had to leave us about the time the frame was in place, but my husband and I spent another 2 days putting all the pieces in the interior. Even for an adult, that process took a long time. First we had to develop a system for finding pieces. We looked for themes in the picture. I took the pieces near the edge and found unifying characteristics that I could use to tie them into the frame. My husband looked for color patches in the interior that he could build into islands. The hardest part was at the beginning. We put pieces in piles in places where we know they should go eventually, but we couldn't connect them until we had chunks of pieces that made sense. As we continued building on these chunks, it became easier to place our pieces. We could anticipate where the pieces had to go and how they fit into the whole. When the puzzle was half done, it became quicker and more rewarding to find places for our pieces. Progress was very rapid near the end. We could easily place every piece.

The Suzuki teacher knows the picture of the musical puzzle children are working on and the strategy of achieving the finished process. Parents need to come to lessons and be involved so they can understand that picture and strategy too. Children need adult guidance until they understand how to look for meaning in the parts for themselves. According to the child psychologist Jean Piaget this synthesis doesn't happen until around age twelve when the frontal brain kicks in to guide the process. At that point, with guidance and consistent practice, students can start to make sense of how all the jigsaw pieces go together. Even as teenagers, they still need some guidance, but they can begin to synthesize their ideas in their own minds and develop a strategy so they won't end up with a frustrating jumble.

A big difference between building a jigsaw puzzles and playing an instrument is that once a puzzle piece is placed, it remains in place until the puzzle is taken apart. In playing an instrument, a connection that might seem very secure one day can vanish the next day. Each time the musical connection is repeated, it gets easier and more secure, but only constant repetition and attention can glue it firmly in place. This process takes years instead of days.

Educators call this connecting process **Synthesis**. The definition of Synthesis is "The combination of parts or elements into a whole". (Miriam Webster's New Dictionary of the English Language, revised, 2001. P. 525.)

Steps to synthesis in the Suzuki method:

1. Listen to the reference recording.
2. Build small chunks of notes with adult guidance.
3. Unify these chunks into meaningful songs using muscle memory and finger patterns, paying attention to melody, harmony, rhythm, phrasing, and dynamics.
4. Build new chunks of songs and tie these into known structures with adult guidance.
5. Review and revise past learning by adding depth to knowledge until it is secure.
6. Repeat.

Enjoy the process!

## Support the Arizona Suzuki Association!

Support Arizona Suzuki Association when you shop with AmazonSmile!  
A portion of your Amazon purchases will be donated to ASA. It's easy, just shop through the AmazonSmile, and select Arizona Suzuki Association as your charitable organization.

<https://smile.amazon.com/gp/chpf/about>

## Fall Round-Up

September 26, Online Zoom

10:00am-12:30pm for Students

1:00-2:30pm for Teachers and Parents (students welcome)

Violin, viola, cello, guitar, flute, and voice students of all levels are invited to join. Students will have morning classes and gather together for a Grand Finale Concert at the end of the morning in which students will perform Suzuki repertoire together.

This event is free for ASA members. Registration is required.

Check the ASA website for detailed schedule and online registration.

Round-Up Review lists: Check the ASA website for review lists for violin, viola, cello, flute, guitar, and voice.

### Schedule:

10-10:50am Student Classes: Flute, Cello/Viola, Voice

11:00-11:50am Student Classes: Violin, Guitar

12:00-12:30pm Student Grand Finale Concert: Violin, Cello/Viola, Guitar, Flute, Voice

12:30-1:00pm Break

1:00-2:30pm Teacher/Parent Workshop "What Musicians Can Learn About Practicing From Current Brain Research" with Molly Gebrian (students welcome)



**Join or Renew your ASA Membership today!!!**

**Only \$10 per year (teacher or family memberships).**

**Join or renew today at [azsuzuki.org](http://azsuzuki.org). Click "Join ASA" and choose with online or paper option.**

## Teacher/Parent Session with Molly Gebrian

September 26, 1:00-2:30pm, Online Zoom

Free for ASA members. Registration required, please visit the ASA website for more info.

### What Musicians Can Learn About Practicing From Current Brain Research

This presentation will focus on what neuroscientists have discovered about how our brains learn and how to apply these insights to practicing and teaching so that practicing becomes more efficient and effective, leading to enhanced performance ability, enjoyment, and confidence. The presentation is divided into five different sections, starting with the basics of how the brain learns and an explanation of why the popular practice method of "start at the beginning and play until you make a mistake" is so detrimental to actual improvement and consistency. Alternative methods of practice are offered that are rooted in scientific understandings of how our brains learn and solidify new skills and information. The next section, on interleaved versus blocked practicing, addresses how to prepare most successfully for performance situations and how to alleviate the common wish that one could get a second chance after a concert or audition. The third section looks at how to use a metronome most effectively to improve steadiness and sense of pulse. The brain behaves in a fundamentally different way when the metronome is off versus when it is on, so the standard way of using the metronome will not be effective in improving sense of pulse. After this, the presentation looks at the research on the importance and benefit to sleep in learning, especially when learning new skills and material. Finally, it concludes with a look at mental practicing and the astounding ways this can actually change the very physical structure of the brain. Throughout the presentation, concrete, practical methods for utilizing this information in the practice room are given.

#### Presenter bio:

Violist Molly Gebrian has distinguished herself as an outstanding performer, teacher, and scholar throughout the U.S. and Europe. Her love of contemporary music has led her to collaborate with many composers, often in premieres of works written for her. She has worked closely with the Ensemble Intercontemporain and Pierre Boulez for performances at the Lucerne Festival and she spent the 2011/2012 academic year in Paris to undertake an intensive study of contemporary music with violist/composer Garth Knox. Her other principal teachers include Peter Slowik, Carol Rodland, and James Dunham. Molly completed her Doctor of Musical Arts in viola performance from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and also holds graduate degrees in viola performance from the New England Conservatory of Music, and Bachelors degrees from Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, in both viola performance and neuroscience. She served as the Assistant Director for two interdisciplinary conferences on music and the brain while at Rice, has published papers dealing with music and neuroscience in the Journal of the American Viola Society, Frontiers in Psychology, Flute Talk Magazine, and The Strad, and teaches an honors course on music and the brain at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Her background in neuroscience gives her unique insight into how the brain learns and how musicians can best use this information to their advantage in the practice room. Given this expertise, she is a frequent presenter on topics having to do with music and neuroscience at conferences and at schools and universities around the country. As a teacher, she has taught recent masterclasses at Ithaca College, Lawrence University, the University of Northern Colorado, the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and Vanderbilt University, and has been invited as a guest artist/teacher/lecturer to the Polish Viola Forum in Poznan, Poland in April 2017. In addition, she has been a faculty member at the Sewanee Summer Music Festival, the Montecito Summer Music Festival, and the International School of Stuttgart. After teaching viola and music theory for five years at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, she joined the faculty at the University of Arizona in the fall of 2019. [www.mollygebrian.com](http://www.mollygebrian.com)





## Practicing during the Pandemic

### By Evan, Student of Chris Dorsey

Hello, my name is Evan and I play the guitar. I would like to tell you a little about what I do for my practices during the pandemic. My practices are usually longer because I have extra time. Unfortunately, since it is summer, I do not get new material because I don't have lessons during part of the summer. This means I need to get more creative. One of the things I do is change the structure of my practice so that it does not get too monotonous. Another thing I do are duets with my brother. I also watch videos from other guitarists to get ideas and hear their versions of songs. Since I had extra time, I learned a song that I had been wanting to learn for a while called Pachelbel's Canon. This also helped with the monotony.

I do my lessons and ensembles on Zoom. Both types are very different than in person. In the private lessons with my teacher, because of Zoom, two people can't be playing at the same time so one person will need to mute while the other person plays. For ensemble everybody mutes and plays along while a recording plays. In concerts everybody mutes while the performers play. Another thing we do are play-ins where people log on to Zoom and play songs as a group. So far we have done two play-ins, one focusing on Book 1 and the other on Book 2 and up.

When my brother San and I practice together, I work with him on his Suzuki Book 1 songs and songs from his reading book. In the reading book there are duets, but we also play songs from the reading book that are not duets, so instead I play the chords. We work on about 7 or 8 songs. Even though there is a pandemic I still have fun practicing.



Evan practicing with his brother.

## 100 Practice Challenge Update

ASA challenged students to practice 100 days this summer! The challenge began in May, and gave the option for students to practice 100, 75, or 50 days this summer. Students who complete the challenge by September 20, 2020 will receive a certificate from ASA. Certificates will be emailed and students who completed the challenge will be acknowledged at the Fall Round-Up to be held online on September 26. Congrats to all who participated!

### Suzuki Book Club Daniel Coyle's *The Little Book of Talent* By Chris Dorsey, ASA Board Member, Guitar

There is a growing number of books focused on improving talent based on current brain research. Wouldn't it be nice if this knowledge could be refined in a practical guide for teachers, parents, and students that would tell us to "do this, not that"?

Bestselling author Daniel Coyle's *The Little Book of Talent: 52 Tips for Improving Your Skills* (Bantam, 2012) is a guidebook of simple, concise, practical tips for improving skills based on research drawn from sports, music, and other talent hotspots and the scientists that study them.

In a Suzuki Online Seminar this summer that I attended, Teacher Trainer MaryLou Roberts recommended this book and pointed out intriguing tips related to hard, high precision skills (a musician's precise finger placement to play a series of notes, for example) and soft, high-flexibility skills (the vast interpretive art of music making, for example).

When we learn hard skills, we have to be precise because our brains are good at building connections but not good at forgetting mistakes. Practicing soft skills, on the other hand, gives us the opportunity to explore and be flexible but still requires us to reflect on what worked and what didn't. As musicians, we need both skills.

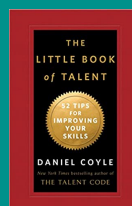
Building a perfect practice chunk (tip #16), an interleaving practice strategy (tip #35), and the engagement of five perfect repetitions with no mistakes (tip #37) are just a few of the practical tips described that you can put into use immediately. I also like the tip #30, "Take a Nap."

Coyle summarizes this new science of talent education: "You want to develop your talent? Build a better brain through intensive practice." As Suzuki teachers, parents, and students, we know that "small actions, repeated over time, transform us." With 52 tips in just 124 pages, Coyle's ideas will resonate true with our Suzuki approach.

***"Don't hurry don't rest. Without stopping, without haste, carefully taking one step at a time will surely get you there." - Dr. Suzuki.***

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2. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials.
3. Choose a charitable organization to receive donations, or search for the charity of your choice.
4. Select Arizona Suzuki Association



## SUZUKI ONLINE SEMINARS OVER THE SUMMER

### By Alice Vierra, ASA Board Member and Cello Teacher Trainer

The Suzuki Association of the Americas was quite quick and adept at coming up with a plan to keep training going during the pandemic. Dr. Suzuki was a believer in life long learning and continuing training for Suzuki teachers and the SAA followed that belief by making Suzuki Online Seminars available to all SAA members who had already taken ECC and Unit 1 in their instrument. Trainers also stepped forward and came up with their own topics and then decided on dates, etc. Members of the SAA stepped up as well by signing up for the seminars. Listed below are board members of the ASA who participated in these Suzuki Online Seminars offered from early June and still continuing into August.

#### LAURA TAGAWA - VIOLIN

I enjoyed taking two SOS classes this summer: Teaching Rhythm: Preparing Students for Bach Double and Beyond with Teacher Trainer Amy Matherly.

Also, Developing Shifting Skills, Book 2-4 with Teacher Trainer Sharon Miller. Both classes were full of useful information and resources for teaching. It was great to have the opportunity to take training courses online and to connect with teachers from across the US and beyond.

#### CHRIS DORSEY - GUITAR

I took the "Book 1 Booster" with Teacher Trainer MaryLou Roberts. It was an interactive session focused on establishing a good foundation and musicality for new guitar students and parents from the very beginning with many practical ideas as well as new approaches to fingering and accompaniment, all delivered with a "Do what is necessary" Zen-like approach.

I also took "Teaching Towards Book 9 from the Beginning" with Teacher Trainer David Madsen. It was a fun session similarly focused on a strong foundation at the beginning with specific focus on posture, right hand and left hand technique, strategies for supplemental technical development, developing the ear, tone, expression, reading as well as the all-important parent's role. We also discussed the interesting contrast of teaching by rote versus teaching by ear.

#### KARI WELDON - VOICE

I am attending the following seminar: Suzuki Voice Online Seminar, hosted by Analia Capponi-Savoleinen, Suzuki Voice teacher trainer and ISA Suzuki Voice Committee, ESA. In Suzuki Voice, we recognize that children bring their own individual ideas to their musical learning based on their culture and personality. This seminar will be discussing how to compliment core Suzuki Voice curriculum with students' cultural and individualistic preferences.

#### ALICE VIERRA - CELLO - TEACHER TRAINER

I received the news that I could offer a Suzuki Online Seminar and immediately went to my favorite topic, teaching the little ones. Since using the Zoom platform was new to me, I decided to take the SOS about how to use Zoom taught by Teacher Trainer and cellist Andrea Yun. Then one month later

I taught the SOS Pre-Twinkle Exploration for Cello. I shared many songs for teaching set-up, how I use all my props for young ones, and we talked about the mindset needed for this level. My participants were enthusiastic, inquisitive, and shared their ideas as well. Having an international group of participants was great. At the end one person said, "We will have to try and get together sometime when we can do that again". The personal connection had been made.



Alice Vierra's cello group lesson on Zoom, cello student with parrot, and pre Twinkle exploration.

A resource by [practizma.com](http://practizma.com) founder Susanna Klein, Associate Director of Violin at Virginia Commonwealth University (used by permission, may be duplicated and shared).



VIOLINIST.COM & PRACTIZMA.COM



## Tech Guide for Online Lessons

### Home Internet Service Bandwidth

- Ideal internet speed for online lessons is 100MB download and 5MB upload, any less than that gets bad results.
- Not sure what your internet speed is? Run an [Internet Speed Test](#) to find upload speed, download speed, and latency. Try an ethernet connection for more speed. Latency is the lag rate and often affects how well sound and video appear to be in sync.
- If your internet speed is good (get off other devices to improve, see below) but you have more than 30 sec latency, unplug and plug back in your router to get latency below 30 seconds.

### Technology Requirements

A computer or tablet, with zoom.us software installed (not phone!)

A relatively cheap microphone plugged in to your device, options below (all come with a stand)

USB Mic Recommendations for Computer:

- [Samson Condensor Mic](#) \$40
- [Blue Snowball](#) \$50
- [Fifine USB mic](#) \$45

Mic Recommendation for IOS tablet (also works with computer)

[Shure MV5 mic with USB & lightning](#) 99\$

### ZOOM SETTINGS FOR LESSONS

General settings, only need to set before the first time:

- go to settings, then audio, then advanced
- Set "Suppress Persistent Background Noise" to "Disable"
- Set "Suppress Intermittent Background Noise" to "Disable"
- Click "Show in-meeting option to 'Enable Original Sound'"

Then during lesson:

Toggle top left to  
"Enable Original  
Sound"

Need to see a tutorial on this?

Royal Academy of Music has a [YouTube Tutorial](#) for these settings

### During the lesson tech recommendations:

- The fewer devices that are actively online in your house while we are in session, the better!
- Make sure that no one is playing Xbox or streaming Netflix during the lesson. You may have to shut down anything that is competing for bandwidth, i.e. other computers.
- Close other applications and browser windows for the lesson to increase your computer processing speed.
- Hook up an external speaker to your computer to make your teacher's sound clearer and more beautiful

Still experiencing lag and sync issues? Some things to try:

- 1) Well before your lessons, turn your router off (unplug) for 30 seconds and back on. Check latency 10 min later, it should be better now.
- 2) During the lesson, turn your wifi off at the computer level, and then back on - this allows the video and audio coming in to be more in sync.
- 3) Last resort: You can also "stop your video" during the session and go with sound only temporarily.





## Room & Camera Set up for Online Lessons

Visibility is key!

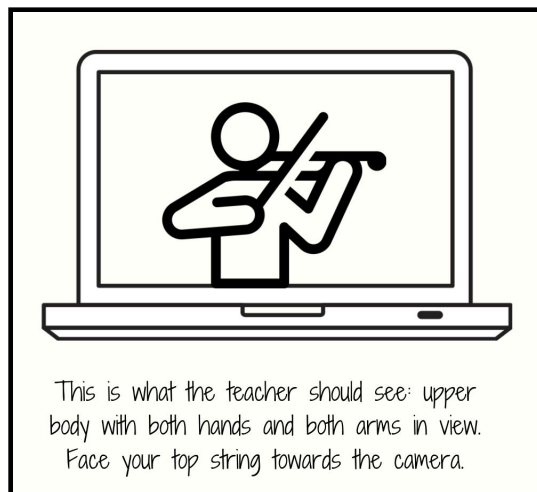
Set up with plenty of room to play and be tuned, ready to go 5 minutes before the lesson starts.

Once the optimal configuration is found, if at all possible, leave most physical “set up” in place in between the lessons.

Follow these set up guidelines:

- Your stand should be in front of you.
- Your computer/tablet on a table, desk or wide window ledge, with mic (and speaker if you want) plugged in.
- Tablets should be vertical in space, not slanted (you may have to get creative...this is why laptops are the best).
- An additional manhasset stand with a towel can serve as a table (make sure it is stable).
- Computer should be slightly to your right (think 2 o'clock for an angle).
- Light (natural or artificial) must be shining on your face, not coming from behind you and shining on your back. Make sure there are no windows directly behind you.
- Make sure both arms and hands plus your head can be seen in the camera view.

Here is the view that the computer camera should have of you:



During the lesson:

Enter full screen mode (top right), then either “pin” your teacher to see only them, hit or the rubric’s cube top right to see the both of you side by side.

**2020-21 ASA Board Members virtual Zoom meeting.**  
**Top: Alice Vierra, Laura Tagawa, Leslie Turner, Laura Syjud**  
**Middle: Chris Dorsey, Megyn Neff, Eunice Elie, Kari Weldon,**  
**Christi Elie, Chris Mahar**  
**Bottom: Mary Wilkening, Louise Scott**

