

# ARIZONA SUZUKI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021



## IN THIS ISSUE

- A Starr in the Galaxy of Stars, page 1-2
- Suzuki Book Club, page 2
- ECC with Alice Vierra, page 3
- Upcoming Events, page 3
- Spring Concerts, page 4
- Movement Training, page 5-6



## A STARR IN THE GALAXY OF SUZUKI STARS

A Starr in the Galaxy of Suzuki Stars

**By Dr. Louise Scott, ASA Board Member and Violin Teacher Trainer**

At one of the first Suzuki conferences that I attended as a young teacher, I had the privilege of hearing William (Bill) Starr and his wife, Connie Starr, pianist and Suzuki teacher, perform a series of variations on Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. As I listened, I thought, "How prophetic that this man and his wife are champions of the Suzuki Approach, play beautifully and their last name is Starr!" I later learned that the variations that they performed, were written by Bill Starr and published as *77 Variations on Suzuki Melodies*. (At NAU, we have used this music in groups for years!)

Bill Starr is indeed a star in the Suzuki galaxy of stars! He lived a long, full life and sadly passed away at age 97 at his home in Boulder, Colorado on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020. (His wife of 72 years passed away in August of 2019).

In 1964 at a music conference at Oberlin College, American teachers viewed a video of a throng of Suzuki students performing the first movement of the Vivaldi A Minor Concerto. The teachers at the conference were amazed and Bill Starr ultimately decided that he needed to go to Japan to see for himself how so many children achieved such a high level of performing at such a young age. Mr. Starr was then teaching at the University of Knoxville and serving as Concertmaster of the Knoxville Symphony. In 1968, on a sabbatical from his duties at the university he and his wife took their eight children to Japan for a year to study how Suzuki was able to achieve such magic with children.

As a result of his year in Matsumoto with Shinichi Suzuki, the *Suzuki Violinist* written by William and Connie Starr, was published in 1976. I encourage all Suzuki teachers, teacher trainees and parents to own this book. As you can see from a partial list the contents, it is all inclusive and it has many pictures to support the ideas presented.

*The Suzuki Violinist – contents:*

*"The Mother Tongue" Method of Education and the Law of Ability by Suzuki, Role of Listening, Motivation, Individual lesson – points for teachers, Parent as Teacher,*

*Practicing Can be Fun, Japanese- American Difference, Group lesson Ideas, Concerts and Recitals, Introduction to Tonalization, Holding the Violin and Bow, Moving the Bow Rhythmically, Basic E String Posture, Use of Tapes on the Bow and Bow Distribution, Changing String Level, Placing the Left Hand, Bow and Finger together, Twinkle, Variation A, Preparation for Long Bow Strokes,*

Teaching Points for Book 1 – 10, Shifting, Intonation, Vibrato, Goals of Practice, Relaxation, Memorization, Stage Fright, Reading Music, Supplementary Literature.

Mr. Starr published many other reading books that include, *I know a Fox with Dirty Socks* (77 very easy songs for beginners), *Scales Plus! For Violin – All Levels of Students*, *Delightful Duets for Young Violinists*, *Adventures in Music Reading Book 1 and 2*, *Rounds and Canons*, *Strings Around the World Folk songs of the USA*, *Taka Taka Polka and Twenty-Six Composers Teach the Violin*. Together, Bill and Connie wrote the book, “*To Learn with Love*”.

The Starrs moved to Boulder, CO in 1982 when Bill became an Adjunct Professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Bill Starr and John Kendall were the founders of the Suzuki Association of the Americas. Starr was the first President from 1972-74. Ultimately the office of the SAA moved to Boulder, where it resides today. Bill Starr continued teaching and training Suzuki teachers at the University of Colorado-Boulder, as well as working with young students at the Boulder Suzuki Strings program. A very touching video tribute to Bill Starr is found at: [bouldersuzukistrings.org](http://bouldersuzukistrings.org)

Bill Starr taught many generations of students, many who have become Suzuki teacher trainers, professional musicians and good citizens across the country. He was always inclusive and had a big smile for everyone. Both he and Connie had gentle natures and gave their time freely for conferences, workshops, and individual training.

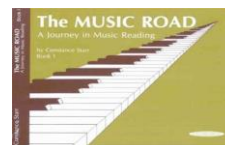
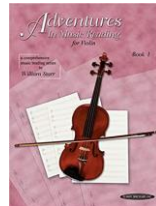
Laurie Niles, editor of the *Violinist.com* website, in an article, “*Remembering Suzuki Pioneer William Starr (1923-2020)*,” wrote several illuminating quotes from Bill Starr, “The most important thing a teacher can have is empathy – how does it feel, when you don’t know how to do it?” and in Bill Starr’s words that exemplifies his own life, wrote, “We should celebrate Suzuki-sensei’s magnificent life by following his example in inspiring children, in believing in their exceptional abilities, in teaching with skill and compassion, and, most importantly, in endeavoring to be exemplary models of noble human beings.”

## SUZUKI BOOK CLUB

Books by William Starr

By Dr. Laura Tagawa, ASA President, Violin

As mentioned in Dr. Louise Scott’s article, “*A Starr in the Galaxy of Stars*,” William Starr wrote many books of interest for Suzuki teachers and parents.



**The Suzuki Violinist** is a comprehensive guide to the Suzuki violin literature. It contains information useful both for teachers and parents, including a chapter called “Practice Can Be Fun” that he and his wife co-authored.

**To Learn With Love: A Companion for Suzuki Parents** was written in 1983. This book focuses on practice, motivation, learning, nutrition, competition, and family lifestyles.

**77 Variations on Suzuki Melodies: Technique Builders for Violin and Viola** is a collection of his compositions, each with a specific technical challenge. These pieces are great for both private lessons and group settings.

**Adventures in Music Reading** and **The Music Road** focus on music reading skills. **Adventures** is for violin and viola and organized by scale, key, and finger patterns. **The Music Road**, written by Constance Starr, presents an effective way for beginning music readers to experience the joy of playing music at the keyboard.

**Rounds and Canons for Reading Recreation and Performance** consists of eighty rounds and canons for violin, viola, cello, or keyboard ensembles as well as string quartets and string orchestras. It features a wide variety including classical, folk, and original compositions.

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## EVERY CHILD CAN! COURSE RECAP

By Alice Vierra, ASA Board Member and Cello Teacher Trainer

We gathered together on Zoom for two Sundays in February for four hours of class each day. The class was sponsored by ASA and I was excited, honored and a bit nervous to teach the class. I had taught it before, but not on Zoom, the syllabus had been revised, so my teacher manual was also a revision and the participant's manuals were newly revised. The SAA (Suzuki Association of the Americas) had revised the class to work better on Zoom and to address equity issues.

Participants ranged from college age to middle age. At least half of them were from Tucson, from the Tucson Symphony and from the University of Arizona. There were some participants from the Phoenix area and other parts of Arizona and from as far away as California, Pennsylvania, and Maine. I was required to follow the new manual, timetable, play videos, lead discussions, share my own experiences, and try and communicate my understanding and passion for Suzuki teaching. So, on February 21 my co-host was ready and so was I and the 14 students started coming into the waiting room in Zoom. I had told my co-host that a piece of me felt like I would be in a "traffic control" room with so much going on! However, once I met the participants using an opening activity where I had asked them to share what kind of music they listened to while growing up, I relaxed some.

It was an easy group to work with and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to work with them. I know of a few who have already signed up for the next step in becoming a Suzuki teacher - to take Unit 1 (Bk. 1) training and I hope even more will do so. The ASA welcomes them to our Suzuki community.



### RENEW OR JOIN ASA TODAY!

- ASA membership is still only \$10 per year!
- Teacher and Family memberships available
- Teachers listed in the Teacher Directory
- Receive ASA Newsletters and event announcements
- Renewing and joining is easy, visit the ASA website and click "Join ASA"

<https://azsuzuki.org/asa-membership-form/>

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

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Summer Institutes: Visit the SAA website for listings by instrument and location.  
<https://suzukiassociation.org/events/institutes/>

Fall: ASA Fall Workshop, date TBA

For more info, please visit the ASA website, click on "Events" <https://azsuzuki.org/>

## SPRING CONCERTS

This past April, ASA invited students, families, and teachers to have an outdoor concert in a neighborhood location (driveway, porch, backyard, etc.) and perform your favorite Suzuki pieces. Here are some pictures from around our state. Thanks to all who participated in sharing music with others in your neighborhoods and communities.

**Guitar students of Chris Dorsey perform in Phoenix**



**Voice and strings students of Kari Weldon, Eunice and Christi Ellie perform a Driveway Concert in Chandler with Suzuki voice teacher Masayo Okano and students in Japan on Zoom**



**Cello students of Mary Beth Tyndall perform at Mission Garden in Tucson**



# The Importance of Movement Education in the Training of Young Violinists (Part 1 of 3)

By Lynn E. Medoff, M.A., M.P.T., Guest columnist

*Lynn Medoff is a classically trained dancer and physical therapist. She owns and operates Lynn Medoff Physical Therapy in Flagstaff, Arizona. She specializes in the treatment of performing artists and has published and taught in this field. Lynn Medoff holds an MA in dance from the University of Illinois and an MPT from Northern Arizona University.*

Several survey studies report a high incidence of upper injury among professional and student musicians.<sup>1-4</sup> The most commonly reported injury is due to overuse or repetitive stress,<sup>4-7</sup> and violinists are among the most frequently injured.<sup>4,8-10</sup> Despite significant growth in the field of medical care for musicians over the past 15 years, many musicians still do not admit they are injured, for fear of losing their jobs and/or status. It is therefore important that musicians, music teachers, directors, and conductors be cognizant of the fact that most injuries are treatable and many can be prevented. In addition, health professionals must be open to searching for new ways to work with this unique population.

Essential to a violinist's success and longevity is the ability to be at ease with the violin. This is not easy since it is unnatural to support a weight upon the shoulder while coordinating independent, specialized fine movements of the two upper extremities. Playing ability is strongly influenced by how a violinist is "set up" and taught to coordinate these movements. I propose that violinists who learn to balance and support the violin in a manner that maximizes movement efficiency and minimizes tension are less likely to sustain overuse injury. I further propose that a method to accomplish this may be to provide young violin students with supplemental movement or movement training.

This paper explores the supposition that movement training can prolong a violinist's career by improving playing quality and preventing overuse injury. It is written from the author's observation, based on the treatment of several injured violinists over the last four years, that movement training is a necessary factor in returning violinists to preinjury levels of performance.

There are many advantages to providing young children with movement experiences. First, young children are kinesthetic learners. They develop a sense of self and the world around them through movement exploration, which heightens creativity and expressiveness. In addition, important musical concepts such as rhythm, dynamics, and phrasing can be learned through specially designed movement exercises. Finally, I propose that children who learn to enjoy movement have better body awareness and are less likely to become locked into static playing postures, which contribute to overuse injury.

Music educators have long been aware of the benefits of movement training. Emile Jaques Dalcroze introduced movement training to musicians in his book, *Rhythm, Music and Education*, written in 1921.<sup>11</sup> Grace Nash, a leading authority in teaching music to young children, incorporates movement into her teaching via Laban analysis, developed by Rudolf Laban in the 1930s. She states in her book, *Creative Approaches to Child Development with Music, Language and Movement*, "The direct and natural path for the child's understanding of music and musical form, and his development of musicality, muscular coordination and freedom of self-expression, lies in movement. If he moves with the musical phrase, expresses the rhythmic pattern with his body instruments, he consequently feels it and understands it"<sup>12</sup> (p. 80).

I have chosen to present summaries of the teaching philosophies of four prominent music/movement educators whose common goal is to improve the movement quality of the performing artist: Rudolf Laban, Emile Jaque-Dalcroze, John Kendall, and Paul Rolland. Laban is traditionally taught to dancers; Dalcroze trains musicians; and the teachings of Kendall and Rolland are specific to the violinist. My intention is to increase awareness among health care practitioners and music educators of the role movement education can have in preventing and treating musculoskeletal injuries by improving the postural and movement quality of violinists.

Finally, common movement and postural faults of the teenaged and young adult violinist are presented, since the responsibility of correcting these faults often falls upon the violin teacher. Correction of these faults through neuromuscular retraining of posture and movement is discussed, and a specific method of retraining is presented.

## **EMILE JAQUES-DALCROZE**

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865—1950) was a pioneer in music education and is well known for his innovative theories. He began teaching music in 1891 after a diverse career as an actor, singer, conductor, poet, composer, pianist, and ethnomusicologist.

Dalcroze based his theories on what he observed as deficiencies in the current trends of music education. He felt that music educators were not holistic in their approach to teaching in that they discouraged interrelationships between musical elements such as form, sight reading, and harmony. Dalcroze also believed that musical training was too intellectual and failed to teach students how to experience

basic musical elements. According to Dalcroze, this was why certain composition students could not sing the chords they had to write, while others could not perform correct rhythms on their instruments.

These observations led Dalcroze to the realization that sensory and intellectual musical experiences should be fused and presented to the young child before beginning the study of a musical instrument. Dalcroze stated his philosophies and theories in two books: *Rhythm, Music, and Education* (1921) and *Eurhythmics, Art and Education* (1930). Today, most people refer to the Dalcroze method as Eurhythmics; however, it encompasses three areas of study: solfege, improvisation, and Eurhythmics. A course of Dalcroze training includes singing, ear training, harmony, counterpoint, form, music history, movement training, applied music, and participation in vocal and instrumental ensembles.<sup>13</sup>

Dalcroze developed Eurhythmics in Europe in the late nineteenth century. It was introduced in the United State in 1915. Eurhythmics is based on the concept that musical rhythm springs from the natural locomotor rhythms of the human body.<sup>13</sup> Dalcroze believed rhythm to be the animating factor that gives continuity and impetus to sounds. He observed that young children first relate to music via a physical response to rhythm and that the inability to respond physically to music created faults in musical rhythmic expression.<sup>14</sup> In his book, *Dalcroze Today*, Bachmann describes Eurhythmics as mobilization of the mind and body.<sup>11</sup> He states that it transmits through the body, by means of movement, concepts that were acquired only intellectually or technically in the past. In a typical Eurhythmics class, students move freely in bare feet to music improvised on the piano. Individualism and expressiveness are encouraged. The body becomes the musical instrument through which the child experiences and feels musical concepts such as meter, tempo, phrasing, rhythm, and dynamics. The music dictates performance of basic locomotor patterns such as skipping, walking, running, and leaping. By moving to the music as it is heard, children realize the interrelationship between time, space, and energy. They learn, for instance, that the giant step requires more space, energy, and time than the tiptoe step.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

It seems logical that young violinists trained in Eurhythmics would be comfortable in using movement to express musical ideas and feelings and less inhibited in their movement when playing the violin. Ideally, Dalcroze movement training should extend into the teenage years and beyond so that this skill and comfort level are not lost.

#### **RUDOLF LABAN**

Hungarian-born Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) was a dancer, choreographer, philosopher, researcher, architect, and theoretician whose creative ideas reformed current concepts of dance and movement. Laban was active in the major European artistic activities of his time, especially modern dance. He strove to make dance more accessible to the layperson and to free it from the constraints of music, drama, and ballet. His first dance school and company were founded on these principles in Munich in 1919. During this time Laban developed his principles of "free" or "absolute" dance whereby "the fundamental means of expression for dance were to be drawn from the rhythm of bodily movement and its spatial and dynamic components."<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of World War I, Laban sought to unify the varied dance techniques and styles by creating a universal language that could be learned and understood by all dancers. In 1928 he published a method of writing dance scores that he called Kinetography (known as Labanotation or Labananalysis in the United States). This method of notation provided a vocabulary for describing movement qualitatively and quantitatively that is applicable to any body movement. Laban founded institutes dedicated to the recording of old and new dances as well as the training of dance notators and researchers. During the Bauhaus and Expressionist periods in Germany (1920—1937), Laban developed theatrical and recreational dance programs, schools, and publications. It was during this time that he worked closely with Mary Wigman, his student, and a renowned modern dancer. The following quote by Wigman is found in Vera Maletic's book, *Body—Space—Expression*. He (Laban) gave to dance a structural foundation analogous to music: the spatial theory of movement and with it a point of departure, a basis for each dance creation"<sup>16</sup> (p. 22).

The three major components of Labanotation are body, space, and effort.<sup>15</sup> The first component relates to the study of body structure and the exploration of the body's many movement possibilities. The second major component is the study of the paths and spatial tensions of the movements available to the body. Movement possibilities are organized with reference to geometric shapes called kinespheres and sequences called space harmony scales. The third component, effort, describes the attitude of the mover in relation to four motion factors—weight, time, and flow. Laban describes possible interactions between the mover and these factors via a continuum of qualities defined by opposing pairs of effort elements. Space effort ranges from direct to indirect; weight effort from strong to light; effort from sudden to sustained; and flow from bound to free. Effort elements do not exist in isolation. Aspects of each combine to form what Laban defines as eight basic effort action drives, which are identified by four contrasting pairs and their modifications; punch/float, glide/slash, dab/wring, and flick/press.

Labananalysis is a part of several performing arts programs around the world. It effectively teaches body and movement awareness in a manner that musicians can relate to and grow from.

**Part 2 of this article will appear in the Fall Newsletter. Article printed with permission of the author.**