

ARIZONA SUZUKI ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021



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NAU VIOLIN & SUZUKI PEDAGOGY PROFESSOR DR. LOUISE SCOTT RETIRES

By Laura Tagawa, ASA President, Violin

After 45 years of teaching, Dr. Louise Scott is retiring from Northern Arizona University. Louise started teaching at Northern Arizona University in 1976 as violin professor. During her time there she began the Suzuki Pedagogy program, one of the few long term Suzuki training programs in the United States. This program offers both undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to complete long term training in Suzuki violin instruction. The teacher trainees, aka “interns” at NAU take pedagogy classes, and both observe and teach students in private and group settings. Louise has mentored hundreds of interns over the years. Her expertise and dedication to the program has made the program unique and the only one in our state. Louise’s students teach in private studios and school programs around the US and beyond.



A Zoom celebration for Louise was held this past Spring. Louise was joined by former students, colleagues and family members. She was also presented with a virtual performance of “Songs My Mother Taught Me” by her former students and accompanied by Rita Borden, piano and Mary Beadell-DiBartolo, cello. Louise’s colleague of 27 years, Dr. Karin Hallberg, will lead the Suzuki pedagogy program at NAU. Violinist and concertmaster of the Phoenix Symphony, Stephen Moeckel will join the faculty as violin professor.

Laura Tagawa (LT): How old were you when you started to play the violin? Who was your first teacher? Memories of lessons when you were young?

Louise Scott (LS): My mother was a violin teacher and when I was about 8 years old, I wanted to play a piece that I heard her teaching -*The Playful*

Rondo. I remember the violin under my chin (I am sure it was a full size) and I tried to play - what a shock! I then joined a beginning instrument summer music program. We worked on how to read immediately. How the violin should be held



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was secondary to reading music. Through high school I studied with several different teachers who focused mostly on the musical page. A picture of me performing in high school makes me cringe when I look at my bow hand. Several teachers and many years later in college, I finally felt that I could play with a decent bow hand and good basic principles of playing, thanks to my teacher Dr. Walter Verdehr, who had just come to Michigan State University, having studied at Juilliard with Ivan Galamian.

LT: *When did you learn about the Suzuki Method? Please share some memories.*

LS: So much of my time on the violin had been spent relearning basic principles. As I started teaching, I felt the need to provide a better and more consistent approach for students learning the violin than I had received. I learned about the Suzuki Method after I graduated from MSU with a Master's degree in performance and joined the North Carolina Symphony. We traveled the state of North Carolina in buses giving concerts. I started thinking more and more about teaching in addition to playing in an orchestra. A member of the North Carolina Symphony told me about the Suzuki method. She told about how young children start with a box violin (this was a long time ago!) and she spoke about the philosophy and outlined the step-by-step process. I was excited to hear that the Suzuki method stressed a positive approach to learning, particularly after suffering a dogmatic and mean teacher in high school. I learned about John Kendall in Edwardsville, Illinois who had a Long-Term Teacher Training program at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Illinois. After a year in the North Carolina Symphony and my marriage to Frank Scott (whom I met at MSU), we moved to Edwardsville, Illinois so I could learn the Suzuki Approach. John Kendall had a great influence on my playing and teaching. He was not only a wonderful teacher but he and his wife, Kay, were both kind, generous, positive and optimistic people. It was such an honor to be able to study with him.

LT: *Tell us about the early years of the NAU Suzuki program.*

LS: We moved to Flagstaff in 1976 when Frank was hired for the piano position at NAU. I started teaching Suzuki violin to students in the community. I am still friends with and see some of the first students that I started. Thanks to Laura Tagawa for the great retirement zoom celebration, I was able to see and talk to some of my first Suzuki students. When I was hired to teach part-time at NAU, I offered teacher training to a few college students. The SAA had not formalized teacher training at that point. As I started to teach at Suzuki Institutes in different places and after the Suzuki training was formalized, I became a teacher trainer. Several years later, I was able to put the training into the curriculum at NAU. We now have an Undergraduate Certificate in Suzuki Pedagogy and a Master of Music subplan in Suzuki Pedagogy, which is the only music subplan approved for the Western Regional Graduate Program, where students who live in the western states have reduced tuition to attend NAU.

LT: *Please share experiences you enjoyed over the years as a teacher trainer.*

LS: As a teacher trainer, I was able to teach at different Institutes and sometimes could hook a family vacation at the end of an institute. Our two sons studied cello, so we often attended the institutes as a family and we were able to enjoy Alaska, Hawaii, Colorado, Utah, and other states, visiting former students along the way.

I enjoyed meeting colleagues at the Suzuki Institutes, but I felt that the Institute teacher training for a week was not as gratifying as working with the university students over a 2-to-4-year period. The follow-through and assessment portion of teaching was missing and leaving for a full week several times a summer was hard, and I was getting older and not so flexible! I then focused on staying home and teaching in the NAU Curry Music Camp in the summer.

Over the years, it has been an important privilege for me to teach university students in lessons and relate how a specific technique in their advanced repertoire began with the twinkle variations or other teaching points throughout the Suzuki books. I feel fortunate that I was able to teach all levels at NAU, be involved in teaching younger students in the NAU Community Music and Dance Academy and challenge my playing skills and musicianship by playing chamber music and in orchestras. We have a saying at NAU when discussing opportunities for incoming NAU string students, "We teach and we play, and we play and we teach."

DO YOU “OWN” THE SONG YOU ARE PERFORMING?

By Alice Vierra, ASA Board Member and Cello Teacher Trainer

Polishing a piece or gaining mastery of a song is an interesting process. Notice I said “process”. Yes - it is not “fast food” but instead like the flavorful soup that has started with sautéing the onions and garlic, maybe leeks, salt and pepper, then adding the broth, then the chopped vegetables, and simmering on the stove for a long while. When I lived in Virginia I usually went to the solo and ensemble festival as a teacher to support my school students or sometimes as a judge. It was not a competition, but the students did receive a rating and comments from the adjudicator. Everyone wanted a rating of “1” which was the highest rating. Depending on the judge if you played all the correct notes at the right time and maybe added some dynamics you would probably get a “1”. However, for the most part the Suzuki kids would often not only get a “1” rating but often the judge would write “A+” for all the categories and then write, “Congratulations to you. Excellent job and thanks for memorizing.”

Let’s take a look at how to master or polish a piece. The first step is to learn all the notes, rhythms, and bowings. It’s important to then be thinking about the latest technique idea that you and your teacher have been working on such as straight bow, tone, or intonation. Put those techniques you have been tweaking into your new piece. Then you need to be sure you can play the piece in the style appropriate for the piece and try and capture the mood of the piece. Witches Dance in a slow sleepy mood is not what Paganini had in mind!

Play the piece in group class and that way you will know if you have really learned it well and it will give you confidence. Listen to the recording again even if you listened last month, last week, or yesterday. Your teacher will then by this stage still have something for you to try such as a bit more ritardando or even fuller sound at the forte or trying to get all the ringing notes to be more resonant, or more bow on the notes at the top of the phrase. Try not to be stiff when you play but rather allow your body to move slightly and enjoy the music. Play the piece with accompaniment. To be sure it’s memorized and test out if it’s truly polished ask yourself the following questions.

When you listen can you imagine doing all the fingerings and bowings?

Are you able to do all the bowings correctly all the time?

Are you using your best technique?

Can you start at the beginning of any phrase or section? On any note?

Is there any section that still feels like a weak link? If so, do repetitions.

Do you have a good ending?

Have you played your song for a friend or family member?



If your answer is yes - then you “own” the song and it’s ready to perform!

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUZUKI-OLYMPICS: ASA Fall Workshop, September 25 in Phoenix

Every Child Can! (ECC) with Alice Vierra, Feb 20 & 27, 2022 on Zoom.

For more info, please visit the ASA website, click on “Events” [azsuzuki.org](https://www.azsuzuki.org)



ASA Fall Workshop 2021 Presents Suzuki Olympics!

Saturday, September 25 from 1:00pm-4:00pm (12:30pm
check in)

Orangewood Presbyterian Church
7321 N 10th St
Phoenix, AZ 85020



All Suzuki "Athletes" are invited to join us for a fun day of musical challenges! This event is open to all ages and will include the following instruments: violin, viola, cello, piano, guitar, and voice.

For more information and registration, please go to:
azsuzuki.org



NO LONGER UNDER CONSTRUCTION – RACHAEL PABST COMPLETES HER SUZUKI JOURNEY

By Mary Wilkening, ASA Board Member, Cello

My husband and I have just completed a 3000 mile round trip from Phoenix through Michigan to Boston with various stops along the way. During the trip we encountered frequent areas of roads under construction. I began thinking about the Suzuki journey and how Dr. Suzuki designed his approach to teaching music to limit the amount of time a student has to spend doing repairs. Each student's journey is spent on carefully constructing the road to get the job done right the first time.

I interviewed my granddaughter Rachael Pabst on her impression of her Suzuki Journey. Rachael began playing violin when she was 4. She has just graduated from high school and is headed to the University of Arizona where she will double major in violin performance and math.



(MW): What is your memory of your various teachers? Rachael: *"I remember my first teacher*



Rebecca McKee in Tucson as doing a lot of fun games and being sure I had a firm foundation. Cindy Baker was my second teacher in Phoenix. We worked on dances and Minuets a lot. She focused on rhythms and movement. Anna Bunce was my next teacher. She used games as a method to get us to remember theory and learn techniques."

Rachael's journey started in Tucson with a nurturing teacher in Rebecca McKee. While she was a pre-Twinkler and Book 1 student, Rachael played a smorgasbord of games at home with her mother. They made up their own words for the Suzuki songs. Her mother augmented Rebecca's teaching by carrying through on suggestion from her teacher, by keeping Rachael on track in practicing regularly, and by making sure she had proper sized instruments as Rachael grew.

(MW): What do you remember about the recitals that you played at the end of each book?

Rachael: *"I got somewhat nervous for recitals, but found them very helpful to learn to play in front of an audience. I learned that music is for sharing. Since I did not know which piece was coming next I had to be flexible in playing."*

Rachael's mother fostered Rachael's progress through the Suzuki books by hosting Book Recitals at the end of each book. Rachael played all the pieces in a book by memory for her siblings, friends, and relatives who were able to enjoy her progress. Each recital was different with opportunities for the children in attendance to help choose the piece that was to be played next. Since almost every child had a chance to choose a piece, this kept the audience engaged.

(MW): How did you feel about the VSSA and ASA workshops you attended? What about the New Mexico Suzuki institute?

Rachael: *"I enjoyed going to VSSA group lessons and meeting friends there every few weeks. I also loved ASA workshops because I*

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could play pieces I knew with friends. I had a chance to play in ensembles and learn new music. I remember going to the Albuquerque Institute and getting a new tailpiece with built-in tuners. I remember being impressed to watch the technician put the new tail-piece on my violin. I loved master classes and hearing other people play the same pieces I knew. I enjoyed the concerts and especially the big performance at the end of the week.”

Rachael attended workshops with ASA each fall as well as group lessons with Valley of the Sun Suzuki Association (VSSA). She attended the New Mexico Institute in Albuquerque when she was 9 with her 7-year-old sister Madeline who also played violin, and her 5-year-old brother Charlie who played cello. 2-year-old brother Andrew got to watch. Rachael’s grandparents came along to help.

(MW): When did you begin to practice without your mother’s help? Rachael: *“I had a transition period in about 5th grade where I would work on a passage by myself and then play it for my mom. This gave me feedback and accountability and helped me to be able to practice independently in middle school.”*

As Rachael progressed, her mother discovered that she could take on more independent practice at age 11 in 6th grade. She began playing with the Metropolitan Youth Symphony about that time and transitioned to the Youth Symphony of the Symphony of the Southwest in 10th grade.

(MW): When did you begin working with Taylor Morris and Gilbert Town Fiddlers? Rachael: *“Taylor Morris was my first non-Suzuki teacher beginning in 7th grade. My Suzuki experience made fiddling and concertos easier because I was used to playing by ear and listening to music to pick out patterns and things to work on. While Taylor emphasized technique, I was very happy I had experienced the fun Suzuki pieces first. I began Gilbert Town Fiddlers in 9th grade.”*

(MW): What friendships did you form through your musical activities? Rachael: *“I have made my best friends through music. Working toward a common goal brings people together.”*

Rachael began playing in a quartet with three friends through Gilbert Town Fiddlers. Even though Rachael did not have a string group at the elementary school she did play often with a worship group at her church. She played with the orchestra at McClintock High School. She participated in regionals and All-State programs through the school system.

(MW): What other things influences your musical journey? Rachael: *“My mom has been amazing. She brought me to lessons, provided all the essential materials, helped me to practice, started me young, and encouraged me every step of the way. Suzuki was a great way to grow up, a great way to connect to others and learn good music.”*

The trip from pre-Twinkler to accomplished musician can seem daunting at the beginning, but Dr. Suzuki truthfully says, “Never rest, Never hurry”. He is talking about taking each step along the way carefully and not trying to take short-cuts. The most direct route is through all the steps in all the Suzuki books, guided by knowledgeable teachers and dedicated parents. Lessons are augmented by Group Lessons, Suzuki workshops and Institutes, and by other opportunities provided by schools, communities, and organizations. Rachael has the foundation to withstand the stresses of the next chapter of her musical road.



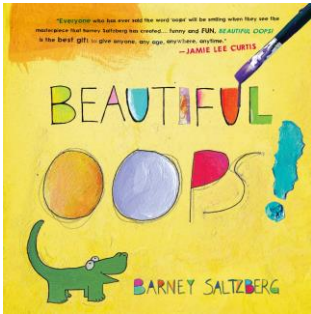
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SUZUKI BOOK CLUB

Children's Books

By Megyn Neff, ASA Board Member, Violin

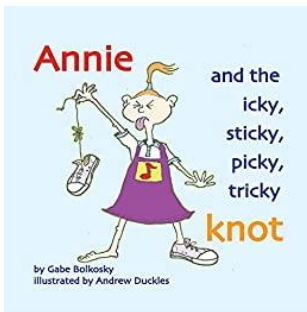
The Suzuki approach builds problem solving skills and confidence in a child. For everyone in the Suzuki Triangle, children's books that tell a story related to problem solving help the child understand how to approach a musical challenge. I first heard of the selections below from Suzuki teacher recommendations at institutes and Suzuki parents on social media forums.

**Beautiful Oops - by Barney Saltzberg (2010)**

Premise: An “oops” like a tear, smudge, stain or hole can be turned into something beautiful with a little creativity and open-mindedness. Likewise, everything that we might see as a polished and complete product doesn’t actually start out that way, and might have even originated as an “oops”.

Review: Saltzberg’s book is a vibrant book of art with flaps to lift, pop-ups, overlays, and an accordion to pull up like a telescope. He conveys the “beautiful oops” message by modeling a torn page turning into an alligator or a stain turning into a frog. The story stays positive and doesn’t dwell on any one “oops” for more than a few words before turning into something wonderful. This is a story that can be used in many areas of problem solving, and most certainly in your home

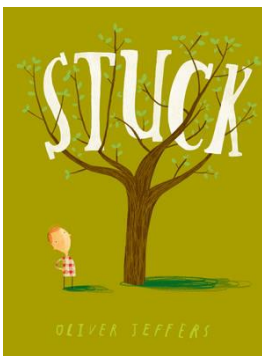
practice or lessons. You could incorporate the question, “What are some ways we could turn this oops into a beautiful oops?” You could incorporate “beautiful oops” time at the end of the home practice where your child can be more creative and improvisatory with their instrument. A “beautiful oops” section of a piece could be one that used to be a struggle, and is now easy and joyful to play. Did the composer of your working piece ever have an “oops” moment, and what would that look or sound like?

Annie and the Icky, Sticky, Picky, Tricky Knot - by Gabe Bolkosky, illustrated by Andrew Duckles (2016)

Premise: The main character, Annie, struggles and struggles with a tangled up shoelace. She grows increasingly frustrated in failed attempts to loosen the knot, and finally resorts to “Mom!” for help. The spirit of Dr. Suzuki flows so eloquently through Mom’s advice: “Any knot can be unknotted if you take your time and move step by step”. Once Annie goes strand by strand, she detangles the knot and all is well again.

Review: This is the only book in my list that was written by a Suzuki teacher and teacher trainer, Gabe Bolkosky from Ann Arbor, MI. The illustrations by Andrew Duckles depict larger-than-life, melodramatic emotions that a child experiences while struggling through a problem, and

Bolkosky’s rhythmic text is simple and straight forward with clever rhyming. A pre-K Twinkle student might want to read this over and over again.

Stuck - by Olive Jeffers (2011)

Premise: Floyd gets his kite stuck in a tree, and throws his shoe at the kite to try and get it unstuck. The shoe also gets stuck, so he throws something larger, and then something larger to get the next object unstuck. Floyd is literally throwing potential solutions at the problem, and his problem grows to an impossible heights. The story gets out of control in a very fun and far-fetched way, reminiscent of the Old Woman who Swallowed the Fly.

Review: This book is fantastical and very entertaining! The illustrations are gorgeous, colorful, and lively. One point of interest is how Floyd’s objects in the tree don’t all belong to Floyd. Parents and teachers should be prepared to read it with their child and have questions ready, such as: “What do you think happens to everything in the tree at the end?”, “How do you think Floyd’s neighbor and the firemen felt? How do you think Floyd was feeling?”, and “What would you have done differently than Floyd?”.

This last question can open up conversations about getting “stuck” in practice or at a lesson, and how to recognize when we might be getting “stuck” using tools that don’t lead to the solutions we desire. Great for all ages.

What books would you suggest for the Suzuki Book Club that you have suggested to your student during a lesson or for home practice?

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVEMENT EDUCATION IN THE TRAINING OF YOUNG VIOLINISTS (PART 2 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.

Two innovative pedagogues have been very influential in the violin world in the past 20 years: John Kendall and Paul Rolland, who developed his own method of teaching dynamic action in string playing. They are well known for their teaching techniques that emphasize the development of a comfortable, relaxed, and balanced posture while playing the violin.

JOHN KENDALL

John Kendall has been a strong force in the Suzuki method of violin instruction. He has served the Suzuki Association in many capacities and was a well-known clinician at Suzuki Institutes and workshops. He was professor emeritus of string development at Southern Illinois University.

Kendall presents his theories of posture and movement training of young violinists in a videotape produced in 1991. The following three concepts are discussed.

1. *Train the big muscles first.* It is more efficient to use the larger proximal muscles as opposed to the smaller distal muscles of the wrist whenever possible. Kendall advocates teaching the student to move the shoulder to accomplish string crossings. This prevents fatigue of the wrist and allows the elbow to move freely.
2. *Calisthenics for violinists.* Kendall advocates exercises to increase the strength of the shoulder and trunk muscles to avoid what he calls “the compression syndrome.” Strengthening exercises are done without weights, and Kendall stresses movements such as swinging, bouncing, and arm circles to loosen up the shoulders and back; small repetitive movements such as arm circles with the arms out to the sides and small bowing motions with the arms extended in front to emphasize proximal stability; and dynamic tension exercises such as pushing and pulling the hands together while circling the arms overhead. Kendall addresses posture via exercises to lengthen the spine, avoid the forward chin, and unlock the joints. He encourages the use of visual cues such as “lift the sternum.”
3. *Body movements.* Kendall advocates playing the violin simply and with grace. To do so, the whole body is involved from the floor up. He describes three families of motion: (1) Balanced stillness for intricate movements during which no movement is visible. (2) Pull-pull motion for slow-power bow strokes. (3) Bilateral or open/close motion for quick bowing to counterbalance the movement of the bow arm and the upper body.

PAUL ROLLAND

Paul Rolland was a professor of violin at the University of Illinois and is well known for his participation in the 1974 University of Illinois String Research Project, the main goal of which was to improve the teaching of basic movements in string playing. He produced 14 videos of groups of children playing the violin at various technical levels and wrote *The Teaching and Action of String Playing*. His writings and videos emphasize balanced, relaxed posture and position, which allow movement to be free. Children are taught to move freely and balance dynamics through rhythmic and movement training. The project embraced the philosophy of Francis Tursi, who stated in his book *Excessive Tension in String Training*, “Because posture is fundamental, we should begin with it. In 1932, it was estimated that two out of three children exhibited faulty body mechanics as a result of their failure to accommodate to erect posture. If posture is poor, breathing, which is so critically important in performance, is certain to be poor also.”

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A major Rolland teaching concept is “total body action,” which he defines as the involvement of the whole player in the act of playing the violin. This includes “the fine, almost undetectable movements of the body which occur when the player is well-balanced and relaxed.” Rolland emphasizes that the body must be lightly balanced at all times so that all of its parts are free to move. He warns of “static tensions,” which cause excessive and unnecessary strain. Such tensions adversely affect natural movement and coordination and interfere with proper breathing mechanisms.

The videos produced by the University of Illinois String Research Project present movement exercises and training techniques aimed at achieving the following goals (note the similarity to those of Kendall):

- Smooth, efficient weight transfer.
- Unilateral and bilateral upper body movements to counterbalance bow motion.
- Bow arm balance and release of the weight of the arm through the bow.
- Prevention of body stiffness especially “the freeze of the left shoulder.”

Similar to Dalcroze, Rolland believed that the pulse and rhythm of music are essential to the development of good movement quality. His book and videos describe various games and exercises to improve the child’s natural sense of rhythm.

Unfortunately, many string programs are not able to provide movement education for their students. Posture and movement training thus become the responsibility of the violin teacher. Since established movement habits are difficult to change, it is optimal to recognize and correct postural and movement faults before they lead to poor playing habits and injury. This requires an understanding of what good posture and movement mechanics are, in an awareness of alignment faults common to the violinist, and the ability to teach the violinist to move efficiently. The following two sections define good alignment and describe how to recognize and correct postural faults common to the young violinist.

PROPER POSTURE

Proper posture is dynamic; it is dependent upon the balance of the skeletal framework and the effort of the muscles to counter gravity. Dr. Lulu E. Sweigard was a pioneer in the areas of posture and movement. In her book, *Human Movement Potential*, she considers posture in terms of the design of the skeletal framework and its ability to conform to the mechanical principles of balance in order to maintain an upright equilibrium. Sweigard further considers standing alignment to be a dynamic phenomenon that is dependent upon muscular force to maintain its equilibrium. Rudolf Laban concurs. He defines posture as “the whole body swaying slightly while ‘standing still’ in a figure eight pattern in continuous, subtle fluctuation between stability and mobility to maintain body balance.”

The trunk, the head, and the extremities (the arms and the legs) make up the skeletal framework. The trunk consists of three units of weight: the shoulder girdle, rib cage, and pelvis. Along with the head, these units are organized around and supported by a central axis, the spinal column. The main parts of the spinal column is made up of 24 vertebral bodies (7 cervical, 12 thoracic, 5 lumbar), which stack up to form a long, flexible column of continuous and opposing curves. When the body is well balanced, the spine closely approximates the center axis of the body through which weight falls. The weight of the head, shoulder girdle, and rib cage is transferred to the spinal column and carried downward to the pelvis and then to the legs. Weight transfer through the body is cumulative. It is therefore essential to properly position the pelvis, which is at the base of the spinal column. When the trunk is well balanced, weight flows easily downward through the long, balanced curves of the spinal column. Minimal effort, in the form of muscular work, is needed to maintain balance (Fig. 1).



FIGURE 1. Organization of posture around a central axis. When the body is balanced and centered, it is organized close to and around a central axis, which efficiently carries the weight downward.

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