

ARIZONA SUZUKI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

FALL 2022



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THE SECRET TO LEARNING MUSIC FASTER: TAKE MORE BREAKS

By Dr. Molly Gebrian, ASA Member and UA Viola Professor

This article originally appeared on [VIOLINIST.COM](https://www.violinist.com) on August 21, 2022.

As classical musicians, we tend to think that practicing as much as possible is the goal. Taking breaks and time off from practicing are not really part of our culture, and it's not unusual for people to equate taking breaks with being lazy. While it's true that putting in the hours is important if you want to improve, breaks are actually the most important part of practicing.

Research on the science of learning has shown that the brain physically changes when we learn something new or improve at a skill. But in order for these changes to happen, the brain needs time off from working. The analogy I use to describe this is road construction: just like people can't be driving on the road while it's undergoing construction, the brain needs you to take a break so it can do its own reconstruction. Until this reconstruction has happened, you will be stuck at the same level of ability. But taking breaks will give your brain the time and space to make the necessary physical changes, and when you come back to practicing, you will be at a higher level than before. If learning is defined as changes in the brain, that means learning happens predominantly during breaks, not when we are actively practicing. This is incredibly counterintuitive, but once you understand this principle, it can help you practice more effectively.

The video below explains a study on microbreaks, which is a great way to get started with incorporating strategic breaks into your practice sessions. I'll explain the findings of the study below if you'd rather read instead of watch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W61WOvUQLng>

In this study, the researchers had people learn a short key-press sequence on a computer keyboard. The goal was to perform this sequence as quickly and accurately as possible. The participants in the study got to practice for 10 seconds and then they would take a 10 second microbreak. They kept repeating this process – 10

seconds of practice followed by 10 seconds of break – while the researchers measured their performance.

In the end, the researchers found that the bulk of the improvement happened during the breaks, not during the practice sessions. In fact, after each microbreak, the participants would perform at a higher level than before the break. The most fascinating finding to me, though, is the brain activity they observed. The researchers found that during the breaks, the brain would do a super-fast replay of the key-press sequence, continuing to practice it 20 times faster (and backwards, which they don't really understand). And the participants weren't mental practicing or anything during the 10 second microbreaks. They were just sitting there doing nothing, and yet their brains were continuing to practice in a hyper-efficient way.

What does this mean for us as musicians?

I have been using this idea with great results when I do repetitions to solidify my playing. Rather than trying to do a big batch of repetitions without any breaks, I will play a passage I'm trying to solidify three times and then I'll take a roughly 10 second break. Then I try to do three more repetitions. If all six were perfect, I move onto the next thing on my list to practice for that day. If any of the repetitions had mistakes, I identify what I think caused the mistake and start my repetitions over again from zero. I then try to do nine correct repetitions total, with a 10 second break after every three (so, three repetitions, 10 second break, three repetitions, 10 second break, three more repetitions). Any time I mess up, the count starts over from zero.

I find that a group of three repetitions before a microbreak is the sweet spot for me – it's enough to test whether I'm consistent, but not so many repetitions at once that I get bored or unfocused. But the real key is the breaks: taking little microbreaks helps solidify my playing much more effectively than when I used to do it without breaks. I also find that my work sticks with me better over time because of the breaks, which is an added bonus.

If you want to learn more about the science of taking breaks, why it works, and ideas for incorporating this into your practicing, the video above is actually Part 4 in a longer series on the power of breaks. The full series is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7PO5fyuz1-zKhOM9eGfzjakZAwhd9UVU>

I hope you'll try out this idea and rethink the role of breaks in your practicing. Rather than being wasted time, they are critical for learning in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Dr. Molly Gebrian is a professional violist and scholar with a background in cognitive neuroscience. Her area of expertise is applying the research on learning and memory to practicing and performing music. She also investigates the intersections between music and language. As a performer, she prioritizes the works of living composers and those who have traditionally been excluded from the culture of classical music. She holds degrees in both music and neuroscience from Oberlin College and Conservatory, New England Conservatory of Music, and Rice University. Currently, she is the viola professor at the University of Arizona.



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2022 Fall Workshop

Registration is OPEN!!! Early bird deadline is Sept 9, regular deadline is Sept 16.

What: ASA Fall Workshop

Who: Suzuki violin, viola, cello, guitar and voice students of all ages and levels

When: Saturday, Sept 24, 2022 from 9:00am-3:00pm

Where: Orangewood Church, 7321 N 10th St, Phoenix, AZ 85020

Why: Play music together and have fun!!!

Schedule:

- 8:30-9:00am Arrive and check-in (you will receive your schedule for the day)
- 9:00-12:00pm Classes
- 12:00-12:30 Bring your own lunch and eat in the courtyard (ASA will provide water and snacks)
- 12:30-1:00 Line Dancing activity for all!
- 1:00-2:00 Rehearsal for Concert (students) and Parent Class (parents)
- 2:00-3:00 Workshop Celebration Concert

Classes: Violin, Viola, Cello and Guitar students will have a Master Class (semi private lesson), Group Class (Suzuki Repertoire, see review lists), and Orchestra Class (orchestra music will be emailed after registration is received).



ASA welcomes Amy Bennett who will lead the orchestras, please read more about Amy below!



Amy Bennett is in her twenty fifth year of teaching with Gilbert Public Schools. She has been the Director of Orchestras at Highland Junior High since the school's opening in 1998 as well as the Assistant Orchestra Director at Highland High School. Mrs. Bennett earned her Bachelor of Music Education and Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance from Northern Arizona University in May of 1998. In 2004, she earned her Master of Music Education degree from Arizona State University. For the past 17 years, Mrs. Bennett has been the Division III conductor of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony in Mesa, Arizona. She has been a faculty member of both the Scottsdale Community College and Northern Arizona University Summer Music Camps and has served as a guest conductor for various honor orchestras throughout Arizona. In 2009, Mrs. Bennett received the O.M. Hartsell Excellence in Music Teaching Award from the Arizona Music Educators Association and in 2015 she received the Arizona ASTA Outstanding Public School Teacher of the Year Award.

ASA FALL WORKSHOP



Yeehaw!!!!

ASA Fall Workshop
On
September 24, 2022
9:00am-4:00pm
At

Orangewood Presbyterian Church

7321 N 10th St, Phoenix, AZ 85020

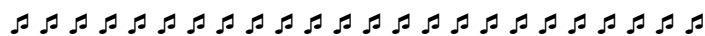
We are roundin' up all Suzuki Violin, Viola, Cello, Guitar, and Voice students of all levels and ages to join us for a boot scootin' good time at our Cowboy Fall Workshop! So dust off your hats, shine your boots, rosin your bows, and tune your instruments for a fun filled day of music!

For more information, please visit azsuzuki.org

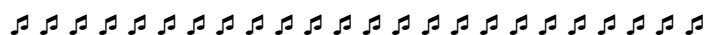


NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

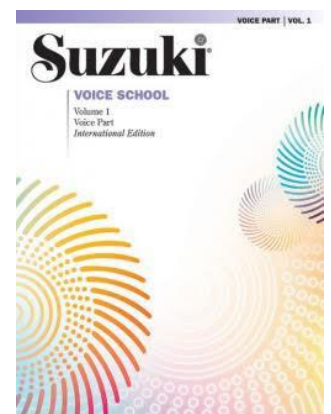
CELLO UNIT 1 RECAP: I had the honor of teaching Suzuki Cello Unit 1 for the Greater Washington Suzuki Institute from June 18 - 26. The institute, which I have taught at before was an on-line and in-person institute which was an ambitious choice for the institute to make, but it all worked out in the end. I had three participants in my class and although we were in three different time zones we felt quite connected once we all figured out how to maneuver the on-line/in-person schedule and time zones. All three participants grew up in Suzuki cello programs and one was a former student of mine, so it was easy to make connections. It was actually the first time I have taught a class where all of the participants had grown up Suzuki and it was fun to ask them about what they remembered and how they would apply their experiences growing up, and what they were learning in class to their new teaching situations to come. I feel like, looking to the future, the Suzuki method is in good hands. ~Alice Vierra



PLAY-IN IN FLAGSTAFF: Violin students of Anne Schreiber played together at Buffalo Park in Flagstaff in August, 2022.



SUZUKI VOICE VOLUME 1 ANNOUNCEMENT: The International Suzuki Voice Community is thrilled to announce the official publication of the Suzuki Voice Volume One Book! Since 2004, Dr. Päivi Kukkamäki, the creator of Suzuki Voice on behalf of Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki, has worked to finalize the material represented in Suzuki Voice Volume One. This has been a cooperative endeavor with Suzuki Voice teachers from around the world, representing many cultures. Through much research, proofreading, and negotiations with Alfred Music, there is a final product that we are excited to add to the Suzuki Book Family! ~ Kari Weldon



CIAO SUZUKI! THE 11th EUROPEAN SUZUKI CHILDREN'S COVENTION IN ITALY

BY KARI WELDON, SUZUKI VOICE TEACHER ESA, SAA, ASA

"Bella Stella dimmi tu! Cosa vedi da lassù", rang out from every nook and cranny of the quaint town of Cuneo, Italy. From July 13-17, Italy hosted the 11th European Suzuki Children's Convention. Around 600 students and teachers from all over Europe and USA gathered, once again, to celebrate the joys of making music together. Many instruments from the Suzuki family were represented, including Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, Harp, Voice, Flute, Guitar, Mandolin, Accordion, and Piano.



Cuneo, Italy



Voice Students and Teachers

The convention opened with a concert of everyone's favorite song-"Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star". Tears were streaming down parents faces as they hummed this special Suzuki melody together for the first time in years! Throughout the week, students clomped around the old, cobblestone streets to their group classes and orchestra rehearsals. During the day, the town hosted pop up concerts under different arches and porticos where students could just start playing or singing whatever music they had prepared or were working on. Solos and ensembles of all instrument sounds created a Suzuki wonderland among the restaurants and pizzerias! Locals would stop just to enjoy the musical blessings bestowed on them from all ages!

In the Suzuki Voice community, we had teachers from Finland, Poland, Ukraine, Argentina, Italy, and USA. Three families from the Arizona Suzuki Voice studio of Kari Weldon were privileged to join in the International convention and walked away with lasting friendships. They performed four concerts and a solo recital during the week, along with hours of group classes and private lessons from the Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainers. Of course, the favorite activity was the daily gelato excursion!



Voice Students and Teachers from Finland, USA, Poland, and Argentina



Voice Students and Teachers at Po up Concert



Audrey, Kari, Deborah, Danny-Suzuki Voice students and teacher from Arizona



Voice Students

Danny age 8, Suzuki Voice Book 2: "I enjoyed the entire music conference in Cuneo. First, I met many great music teachers from all over the world, took lessons from them, and learned new techniques! I participated in many group and individual performances. At first I felt very

nervous when I sang my songs by myself in the street Via Roma (where the main events took place for the conference). With encouragement from my teachers and teammates, I felt more and more relaxed. On the Saturday afternoon performance, I could sing the songs loudly and freely! I enjoyed the foods there very much. I loved all sorts of pizza, especially pizza margherita, not to mention pastas, desserts, and ice cream! The thing I least enjoyed was the weather. It was so hot and humid. I sweated a lot! Another thing I didn't like was that we had to walk a lot everyday. In the hot environment, I got easily tired. "



Danny

Yuying and Liwen, Suzuki Voice Parents: "This was definitely an unforgettable experience for our family! We enjoyed the food, the beautiful city, and most importantly the music. The choir sang the songs in such a harmony that we enjoyed every part of the performances! We know that it is not easy to reach such a high quality of performance within such a short period of practice for all the teachers and students from all over the world! The dedication from the teachers and the students made us as an audience enjoy the high quality performances despite the hot weather everywhere! Besides, we saw great progress from Danny. In his first individual performance he was so nervous that his voice could barely be heard. But still the audience was so nice to applaud to encourage him! Danny learned so much from all the lessons he took, and on the last day's class performance, he could fully enjoy the music pieces and performed so well. We felt so proud of him! We would like to thank all the teachers and organizers of the conference for such a great music feast! We look forward to the next one!"



Voice Students at rehearsal

Audrey age 11, Suzuki Voice Book 4: "The best part of this convention was getting to sing as a whole group. It was really fun to see how large the whole Suzuki group was and performing with everyone. I did not know that so many instruments were in Suzuki and the sound was beautiful when we all harmonized. "



Harp Concert



Cello Group Class



Violins at Twinkle rehearsal

The theme of the conference was Italian Opera, and truly Puccini and Verdi would have been proud! At the final concert, all instruments represented their own instrument family in a mini concert, brought together by two All Instrument pieces, featuring the compositions of Italian local Francesco Cerrato: "Lights in the City" and "All Opera". The students were excited to have the opportunity to perform with a professional opera tenor and soprano, as well.



Gala Concert

EVERY CHILD CAN! (ECC) 2023: ASA will host the class in 2023. You can find a list of upcoming ECC classes at the Suzuki Association of the Americas website: <https://suzukiassociation.org/events/course/ecc/>

Once again, students and teachers came together, bringing their various cultures, languages, ideas, and love of music to play and sing in one, beautiful tone! The logo promoted by the convention was “Which nightingale learns to sing by reading?” -S. Suzuki. When the music is already in the heart of each student and teacher, the result is nothing but joy and beauty! It was such a thrill to see old friends, make new friends, and remind ourselves of what the Suzuki Community is all about-teaching and learning the beauty of our world through the beauty of music!



Pop up concert



Suzuki Voice Students from Finland and USA



Gala rehearsal



Opera Tenor and Soprano at Gala Rehearsal



Suzuki Voice Teachers from Finland, Italy, Poland, USA, and Ukraine

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”

azsuzuki.org