



# ARIZONA SUZUKI ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025

[azsuzuki.org](http://azsuzuki.org)

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## Transitions

by Dr. Laura Tagawa, ASA President, Suzuki Violin Teacher



“Live by looking for things to do for other people.”  
— Shinichi Suzuki

I joined the ASA Board in 2006 when I returned to Arizona after living abroad for several years teaching and playing violin. For the past 16 years I have served as the president of ASA, a position from which I have gained valuable experiences. ASA is led by a Board of Directors made up of teachers and parents who volunteer their time and efforts to serve the Arizona Suzuki community. ASA furthers the Suzuki philosophy by building a community which brings together students, teachers, and parents.

Serving as the ASA president has given me the opportunity to collaborate with Suzuki teachers, parents, and students from around the state and beyond. I am truly grateful to have had the opportunity to serve and I encourage anyone interested to serve and be involved as a leader in ASA.

The ASA board has President-Elect, President, and Past-President roles. This system allows for smooth transition and growth through shared leadership. It has been an honor to serve as ASA President, and I am looking forward to my new role as President-Elect. I would like to introduce Dr. Chris Dorsey who has served in the position of President-Elect. Chris joined the ASA Board in 2020 and has been a Suzuki guitar teacher since 2004. He will bring new ideas and years of experience to the Arizona Suzuki community through his role as ASA President.



Chris began teaching classical guitar at the university level in 1996 and has been teaching children since 1999. In 2005, he established the Dorsey Guitar Studio at Summit School of Ahwatukee, a PreK-8 Private School in Ahwatukee (Phoenix, AZ). Chris joined the Summit School faculty in 2007 and teaches the Middle School Rock Band, Fourth and Fifth Grade General Music, and Suzuki Guitar for Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade. He earned a Bachelor of Arts, Commercial Music, from Belmont University (Nashville, TN),

Master of Arts, Music from Middle Tennessee State University (Murfreesboro, TN), and a Doctor of Musical Arts from Arizona State University (Tempe, AZ). He has studied Flamenco in Granada, Spain and Tango in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is a registered Suzuki Teacher in Guitar (Units 1-9) and Suzuki in the Schools (Levels 1 & 2).

Chris performed throughout the United States and also in Mexico and Northern Europe with the Santa Fe Guitar Quartet from Argentina and recorded two albums with the quartet: *Journeys* (2003) and *Wapango* (2007). He has also studied Argentine Folklore with guitarist/composer Marcelo Coronel in Rosario, Argentina, where he recorded a solo album of the composer's music, *Antiguo canto* (2010).



**Save the Date!**

**Fall Workshop**

**SAT, NOV 15, 2025**  
**9AM - 3PM**

**ORANGEWOOD PRES CHURCH (PHX)**

## Suzuki Early Childhood Education and the Seven Concepts of the Suzuki Philosophy

by Alexandra Jacques and Melodie Gardner, Violin and SECE Teachers



Melodie Gardner and Alexandra Jacques are very excited to have started a Suzuki Early Childhood Education class in the East Valley this spring, with plans to continue in the Fall. This is a great class where parents and young children ages 0-4 can bond through singing, movement, and playing instruments while building musical and life skills. This class isn't new to the Suzuki world, but is fairly new in Arizona. We've been having so much fun, and would love to have families with littles take advantage of the opportunity to participate!

Classes are currently on Mondays at 10am, contact Melodie or Alex (see below) for location and other details.

Suzuki Early Childhood Education (SECE) is a weekly music program for children ages 0-4 with their parents. It was developed by Dorothy and Sharon Jones, at the encouragement of Dr. Suzuki, who of course believed that music education should start as early as possible. The class is designed for teachers to work closely with parents to create a positive, nurturing environment for children, to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and development of fine character. Our perspective of SECE is as both trained teachers, and as parents who have had our own children participate in SECE programs. We spend much of our training focusing on the Seven Concepts of SECE, core beliefs of the Suzuki Philosophy that we can sometimes forget about in instrumental lessons. Studying these concepts in depth has influenced our violin teaching, and are very valuable in parenting as well. Here are the seven concepts, with explanations as they fit into the SECE curriculum and class activities.

**Every Child Can Learn:** This fundamental belief that all Suzuki teachers and families hopefully share, is the reason why it wasn't considered unusual for me (Alex) to enroll my son into an SECE class at an institute when he was only 3 months old. Teachers understand that babies and toddlers have unlimited potential to learn, and activities are designed so that there is something for every child. The three-month-old baby may be tracking the ball rolling in the circle at the beginning of class with his eyes for the first time, while the 1-year-old may develop the skills to roll the ball in the circle without his mother's help, and the three-year-old will be watching the circle to see who hasn't had a turn, and who they should roll the ball to next.

**Ability Develops Early:** Children's brains develop rapidly in the first three years of their life, and infants are born already being able to recognize their mother's voice and sounds heard in the womb. The SECE program aims to create a nurturing environment as early as possible, allowing children to experience music through listening, singing, movement, and playing instruments. A number of skills are addressed, such as steady beat, understanding pitch, counting, tracking left to right, social/emotional skills, and many more than can be listed here. Prenatal listening is also encouraged for expectant mothers.

**Environment Nurtures Growth:** A primary goal of SECE teachers is to create a calm, supportive, low-pressure environment with stimulating musical experiences. Children and parents sit in a circle to encourage children's focus in the circle, the class includes a variety of activities with little downtime, teachers speak calmly, and children are encouraged to take turns on instruments, but never pressured. This allows children to learn in small steps when they are ready.

**Children Learn from One Another:** Unlike other music programs, SECE classes are not divided by age or ability level. Having a mixed ages of babies and toddlers in the class allows younger babies to learn from observing the older children, and older children are motivated to model their skills for younger children. In an ongoing class, a six-month-old baby might see a two-year old walk into the circle every week to help the teacher count the drums, and once he can walk, will know the right time to do the same during class.



**Success Breeds Success:** Celebrating success leads to more successful learning. In SECE class, even the small successes are celebrated, such as a baby taking the mallet for the lollipop drum for the first time, rather than just having a “listen turn” for the steady beat activity. This will create confidence, and motivation to repeat this in the next class. After many successful weeks he may be confident enough to walk up for a turn on the drum without his mom. Celebrating each successful step in class creates a rich, joyful learning experience for each child, and builds their character as they find joy in seeing their classmates learn.

**Parental Involvement is Critical:** One of my favorite tips from the teacher of my (Alex) son’s SECE class at an institute was encouraging the parents to sing all of the songs in class. We might not love our own singing voices, but in our children’s eyes, we are rockstars, and our singing will, in time, encourage them to sing. SECE classes set up the Suzuki Triangle (parent, child, teacher) from an early age, and acknowledge that the parent is the child’s most important teacher. Babies and toddlers rely on their parents for just about everything, so seeing their parents’ involvement in class is so valuable to their development.

**Encouragement is Essential:** A wonderful moment, observed often in SECE classes, is a child going back to their parent for a hug after a successful turn on one of the instruments. Children look for motivation to perform, and those hugs, smiles, and verbal praises mean everything to a child when they do well. They are far more likely to continue in their efforts with loving, positive reinforcement from their parents.



To learn more about SECE, you can visit the SAA website, (<https://suzukiassociation.org/ece/about/>), and I highly encourage you to listen to the “Building Noble Hearts” podcast, Season 1, Episode 5, “Skills I Didn’t Know My Child Had” which is available on podcast apps or the SAA website.

If you have any questions, you can contact Melodie ([melodiegardner@gmail.com](mailto:melodiegardner@gmail.com)) or Alex ([aly788@gmail.com](mailto:aly788@gmail.com)).

## Seeing Beautiful Hearts Bloom

by Mary Wilkening, ASA Past-President



When my daughter Katie was about 10, she said to me, "Mommy, when I grow up my kids are going to play Suzuki instruments." I wasn't so sure that was going to happen, but it certainly has. Katie supervised the practice sessions of all her seven children until they were about eleven years old. They listened endlessly to Suzuki CD's in the car and at home. Five of the seven are still playing and the other two have taken different creative directions. We are celebrating two graduations this May: Rachael is graduating from U of A with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and Charlie is graduating from high school and will enter the U of A in

Engineering in the fall. Rachael played violin in the U of A orchestra during most of her college career and has studied violin there most of her four years as well. Charlie will continue playing his cello in the U of A orchestra. Charlie was principal cello in the Interlochen High School World Orchestra last summer and had a chance to perform the Elgar Cello Concerto with the Chandler Symphony in November. Suzuki music has been a catalyst in the family for twenty-three years and I am so proud to see the beautiful, well-rounded souls that are blooming into adulthood. As Shinichi Suzuki said, "Teaching music is not my main purpose. I want to make good citizens. If children hear fine music from the day of their birth and learn to play it, they develop sensitivity, discipline and endurance. They get a beautiful heart." It works.



**Violinist Rachael Pabst**

**Graduating in May from University of Arizona**



**Cellist Charlie Pabst**

**Graduating in May from McClintock High School**



## News from Around the State

### Violin Students of Anne Schreiber Celebrate Suzuki Book 1 Recitals

Violinists Saachi Sastry and Nysha Naik, students of distinguished Suzuki teacher and ASA Board Member Anne Schreiber, celebrate their Suzuki Book 1 Parties. Bravo, Saachi! Bravo, Nysha!



Saachi Sastry's Book 1 Party



Nysha Naik's Book 1 Party



## Korean Guitarist Bo Byun and England's Mela Guitar Quartet Inspire Young Guitarists.



On March 5th, classical guitarist Bokyoung Byun (Korea), Assistant Professor of Guitar at the University of North Texas, visited the Dorsey Guitar Studio hosted by Summit School of Ahwatukee, a PreK-8 Private School in Ahwatukee (Phoenix, AZ) to work with Dr. Chris Dorsey's Suzuki Guitar students in a master class. The following day, Ms. Byun performed a very special classroom concert for Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade Suzuki Guitar students at Summit School.



Later that month, the Mela Guitar Quartet from London, England visited the Dorsey Guitar Studio and Summit School of Ahwatukee for a master class and outreach performances. The quartet's most recent album features transcriptions of orchestral and piano music for guitar quartet and includes Glinka: *Ruslan and Lyudmila* Overture; Debussy: *Deux Arabesques*, Saint-Saëns: *Bacchanale*; Ravel: *Ma Mere L'Oye* suite; Rachmaninoff: *Polka Italienne*; Holst: *Fugal Overture*; Elgar: *Gavotte*; Humperdink: *Hansel and*

*Gretel* Overture; Hisaish: *My Neighbour Totoro* suite.

Here's a great video from the quartet performing music from Studio Ghibli:

[My Neighbour Totoro Suite - Joe Hisaishi | Mela guitar quartet](#)

Please send your Suzuki news to: [arizonasuzuki@gmail.com](mailto:arizonasuzuki@gmail.com)

## ASA Board Election

This May, ASA will be holding an election for the 2025-26 Board of Directors. Voting is open for all ASA members during the month of May. To vote, please visit the ASA website, <https://azsuzuki.org/asa-board-election-ballot/>

### 2025-2026 ASA Board of Directors

Chris Dorsey, **President**

Laura Tagawa, **Past-President**

Chris Mahar, **Treasurer**

Samara Humbert-Hughes, **Secretary**

Christi Elie

Eunice Elie

Alexandra Jacques

Anne Schreiber

Louise Scott

Laura Syjud

Alice Vierra

Kari Weldon

Mary Wilkening



## ARIZONA SUZUKI ASSOCIATION

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### 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 are easy! Visit the ASA website and click "Join ASA"

[azsuzuki.org](http://azsuzuki.org)

*"Children learn to smile from their parents."*

- Shinichi Suzuki