

Suzuki News



Term 4, 2020 / Newsletter

Mission: To nurture happy and successful future world citizens through music using the guiding principles of the Suzuki Philosophy and Pedagogy. **Vision:** Suzuki Music SA aims to create and develop a nurturing, vibrant, active and creative community of teachers, students and families for the study and performance of music in accord with the Suzuki Philosophy and Pedagogy. Through the study and performance of music we seek to enrich students' lives, enhancing their family relationships and encouraging them to strive for excellence in all areas of life.



First Piano Concert for 2020 by Anne ApThomas

On Sunday 20th September, my students were excited about their first piano concert for the year. They had all been disappointed that there wasn't one due to the disruption of COVID-19 and kept asking when they could perform. There was such an air of excitement in the chapel and the performance standard was very high. They had all worked very hard for the concert.

I would like to thank Mindi and Ian Hercus for their help in setting up the sanitising tables. Also Ian for helping out as a COVID Marshal for the afternoon.

Looking at the photo makes me feel so proud of all of the students. They are fortunate to experience the legacy left to us by Dr. Suzuki and benefit from the Suzuki approach to learning music.

President's Report Term 4 - October 2020

Welcome back to term 4. What a year this has been! Our whole way of living has changed.

We feel sorry for our families who have relatives living either in Melbourne or overseas who are not able to visit Adelaide at this stage. Hopefully, it won't be too long before our borders are open.

I know many of our students are preparing for the graduation concert on the 1st November. This is an important concert and the first graduation opportunity we've had this year. There will be almost seventy-five students graduating over four concerts. This is a wonderful number of students who will be performing.

Playing in a graduation concert recognises the child's progress through the levels and is a very important part of the Suzuki system. The goal for each child is to play their piece with confidence, having developed a high standard of performance.

This requires sensitivity and musicality that occurs once the piece has been well learnt. Students develop a great sense of achievement from performing in front of their peers. Learning a graduation piece takes patience, commitment and time, both on the part of the students and their parents.

The concert is a celebration, not only for the students, but for the parents as well. It is a time to be proud of your children and a time when they are rewarded for their efforts.

We need to remind ourselves of the benefits our children are receiving by learning music through the Suzuki Method. A famous quote of Dr Suzuki states: "Ability is fostered through the act of repetition."

Repetition is such an important aspect of daily music practice. Students need to try to make each attempt better than the last. This speeds up the learning process and also develops concentration and self-

discipline, so that students are able to engage in focussed practice.

When the ability to do one activity is fostered properly, this marks the beginning of a higher level of ability. Ability will develop slowly, at the child's own pace. After learning the notes of a piece the next step is to learn to play it better and even more beautifully. This is the process that affects the final outcome of a graduation piece.

It is the teacher's role to make sure the basic techniques are well established. We need to guide not only the student but the parent in understanding that we have the child's best interests at heart, and slow and thorough progress is the only way to achieve success.

Remember patience, constant encouragement and enthusiasm all play a very important part in the success of this method.

I encourage all members to attend our annual AGM on 29th November at 1:30. For the first time we will be holding the meeting online via Zoom. See pages 28-29 for your invitation and an opportunity to nominate for the 2021 Suzuki Council.

Enjoy term 4 and we would like to wish you a wonderful Christmas and all the best for 2021. I hope it will be a more relaxing and less stressful year than 2020.



Anne
ApThomas

Suzuki Music SA
President

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Suzuki Showcase 2019 Memories



photos courtesy of Deb Signorelli

Showcase 2019 Memories Senior Cellos playing Danse Rustique by Squire



photos courtesy of Deb Signorelli

Suzuki Showcase 2019 Memories Featured performers



photos courtesy of Deb Signorelli

Showcase Memories Senior Violins playing Concerto in E Minor by Mendelssohn



photos courtesy of Deb Signorelli

Showcase 2019 Memories Organiser, compere, accompanist and teachers



photos courtesy of Deb Signorelli

My Granddaughter's Musical Beginnings by Sandy Hammond

My granddaughter Tintin is three-and-a-half years old and has started learning Suzuki violin with Sonia.

When my granddaughter was around 11 months old she began to notice clocks. All of the aspects of an analogue clock intrigued her - the face, its hands, the numbers, the various shapes and most importantly the sound. Seeing a clock would put her into a frenzy of laughter and excitement, pointing and chanting "ick ock", and swinging her body to the rhythmic sound, as if her body had become the pendulum.

Around this time her mother became pregnant with twins and Tintin escorted us to regular ultrasound appointments. When Tintin heard her sisters' heartbeats a connection was made. She was astounded at how the heartbeats sounded like the ticking of a clock.

This primary discovery of rhythm has helped Tintin immensely in exploring the various types of rhythm that exist in all of us. Discovering and connecting the rhythm of her own breath, and practising listening to this breath, has helped enable her to calm herself.

We often relax and listen to classical music before bed. When she found Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, she became obsessed. She quickly understood the changes in the music and visualised the birds and the changing of the seasons. Tintin was able to fully explain what was happening in certain parts of the music. It was clear she was not just listening with her ears but with an inner feeling that placed her in Vivaldi's actual cornfields during the storm. She loved to conduct the music throwing her hands and her body in a high energy trance as the music seemed to possess her.

Her ear began to become tuned to recognise different pieces of music and names of the composers. Tintin learnt all the names and sounds of the different instruments within an orchestra. She started requesting to watch videos of certain violinists by name. Soon after we noticed that she was picking up everyday objects from around the home and making them into imaginary violins. Often it was the toddlers' toy guitar and a ruler as a bow. She would invite us to hear her perform. She imagined that she was on the stage as a principal violinist creating a magnificent solo piece of music. Tintin was persistent in asking to learn violin, stepping out of her imagination just for moment and requesting to learn the "real" violin, as she put it.

A wonderful teacher was found in Sonia. And Tintin is in absolute awe of Sonia and devours her every word. When Sonia picks up her own violin to demonstrate something to Tintin, it is as if time stops. Tintin will discuss how she too will be a violin teacher and also a principal violinist in the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra one day.

Before starting Suzuki, Tintin was told that she would begin learning on a box violin. Initially she was annoyed, but when it was explained that she needed to demonstrate she could care and look after the box violin before she could progress to a real violin, Tintin was electrified with excitement!!

When the special day came to be measured for a real violin, Tintin was ecstatic. A Stravinsky 1/16 size became her new companion. When it was time to pack Stravinsky away at the end of a lesson, Tintin would explain how sad she felt and how she would miss Stravinsky until the next day.

Recently Tintin went to a performance by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and naturally she wanted to take her Stravinsky violin to the performance. When observing performances Tintin is gob-smacked, still and alert; simply entranced. At the end of this recent concert the principal violinist came over to Tintin. She asked Tintin about the violin she was carrying and if she could play something for her. Tintin explained that she has Suzuki violin lessons and that her teacher is Sonia and she proudly played *Busy Busy Stop Stop*. The professional violinist then applauded Tintin's performance. Tintin quickly told her that one day she too would be a principal violinist performing in the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra!



So You Wanted a Break From Lessons - Then What? by Sian Williams

Isaac Wilson is a 12 year old violin student with Sian Williams. His sister Ellie is also a Suzuki student learning cello under Therese O'Brien.

Their lovely family have lots of artistic talent with both mum Salenna and Isaac being photographers. Isaac recently took out the title of 2019 Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year and his photography has been displayed at the South Australian Museum!

Isaac was kind enough to chat to his teacher Sian about his decision to stop his lessons for a 'break' and what made him 'come back!' Many students sometimes for whatever reason seem to feel they need a rest, and sometimes it is for a small reason they can work through, and other times it may be due to other shifts in their lives that need to create a bit of space for them to grow! What is always wonderful is that a student feels comfortable, brave, and excited enough about their learning to restart and jump back in. Isaac has answered some questions for us here. Thanks Isaac!

How long have you been learning your instrument and what made you want to start it in the first place?

I Started in 2017 because I have always liked the violin, and wanted to learn something. I started before my sister Ellie.

What did you know about learning music before you started? Had you learnt anything before?

Yes but only the recorder at school, for one term. Lots of schools do this I think.

How did you find lessons? How old were you when you started and what other activities were you doing at the time?

I thought lessons were pretty fun, and I was quite busy with a lot of sport. I played footy and also swimming. I still play football, in fact we just won our grand final this year!

What piece did you start before you decided you would like to stop or have a rest? Was the piece challenging? Was it part of the reason you decided to stop?

Yes, I was up to *Happy Farmer* and I was finding it very challenging. I had found the *Minuets* also quite challenging and I felt like I needed a break for a little while.

What are your other hobbies and loves? How long have you been doing these?

I have also played cricket for a while, since 2018. And I really love photography. I have been doing photography for as long as I have been playing violin.

Have you got any siblings and do they learn an instrument as well?

My little sister Ellie learns the cello with Therese. Sian encouraged us to go and have a look at Therese's studio and Ellie had a lesson and liked it.

What is your school music program like? is there much to do?

No there isn't actually, so it is good to have events out of school to go to and concerts also. Sian told us today about the Festival of Music Orchestra which is something I might do next year or later, because you can play in that until year 10.

So after a while your family touched base with your teacher and suggested some lessons again. Was this your idea? Why?

Mum was on a Facebook page and saw a violin for sale. It kind of reminded her to think of asking me what I thought about lessons. She showed the violin to me and asked me what I thought. I said yes straight away, but it was too big so we are renting one for a little while until I grow into that size.



So You Wanted a Break From Lessons - Then What? continued

How did you feel going to that first lesson again? Can you remember whether you felt like you had a goal or purpose for returning to lessons?

Not really, I just wanted to get back into it.

Do you feel different in your lessons now? How?

Yes I am enjoying it more now.

What's different about the way you learn now, if anything? Is it how you thought it would be?

It actually feels a lot easier than before.

Did you take long to get back into the learning and practice side of it?

I have already gone further than I did before.

What did your teacher suggest and from those suggestions what did you try and has it helped or worked to get you going again?

She suggested practising more often than I was, and breaking things down more into little pieces. It is working.

Do you have any goals with your music going into year 7 or high school soon? How does music add to your life?

I do not have actual goals but I do feel that music adds a sense of achievement to my life.

Do you have any advice for parents or children wanting a break from their instrument or thinking about starting again if they stopped like you did?

I think if you are thinking of taking a break it is not a bad thing and you should just take it. It isn't as hard to get back into it as we learn from memory and most of what we know is already in there.

Did you know that your own teacher had "a rest" from her instrument in year 5? What do you think of that?!

No I didn't know that and I think that is interesting to think that someone that teaches and does a lot of violin had a little break too.

Teachers note- Isaac is a lovely student, with a loyal and hard working Suzuki family! From my end, he used to put a huge amount of pressure on himself! I think Isaac might have become frustrated with himself, and the end of book 1 is indeed a hard slog!

Sometimes when a student asks for a break, it is good to try and see if you can work through whatever is going on and simply keep going. But if things are overwhelming and becoming stressful, a teacher must respect a family's choice! What is beautiful about this lovely family is that they are immersed in art of many kinds, Ellie's cello, and a continued contact and friendship with me, between teacher and parents. I think this level of contact has meant that the family, and most importantly Isaac, has felt an open door at all times, and the sincere and well meaning invitation to 'come back in when you are ready'. Certainly it is interesting as a teacher to see a student who has matured and grown up even more in a year or two, and if they have made the choice to come back themselves, even better!

Isaac was always a very good student and a lovely child, but now that he's a little older he is absolutely better at listening to my suggestions about 'productive practice' rather than simply long practices and about breaking down the 'hard bits' into little bite size pieces. Upon restarting, it is so important to have realistic goals about what to do- it involves starting at the start! Being patient with yourself! Knowing there is a little bit- or a lot- of ground work to do to get back 'where you were!'

Certainly Isaac is more relaxed, happier and even more focussed than before (if that is even possible as he was very much so before!) and, really, the hard work is done by him by consistently listening to suggestions and then- actually following them- by increasing the listening around the house and by being more structured at practice time- doing things twice as much but half the amount rather than 'skimming' through entire pieces. Everything looks so wonderful for a graduation very soon, and with a fresh outlook I am looking forward to having Isaac play some lovely duets with his sister, and continue learning harmonies with the Suzuki songs which is a new love of his lately. So exciting to have a phone call to say he was coming back!

Teachers - always have an open door and listen to what the child and family are saying. Sometimes a little break IS as good as a holiday:)



I Love TwoSet Violin! by Molly Liu

TwoSet Violin inspire me to practise by telling me to practise. The End! Ok, I'm just kidding! TwoSetViolin consists of two professional violinists called Brett and Eddy. They are YouTubers that have a channel teaching you about classical music and also how to laugh and have fun with music. TwoSetViolin have helped inspire me to practice because they make practice seem so fun!

TwoSet also shares with you the more painful aspects of getting good at violin. They talk about when they were still students struggling to improve their skills, and how all that was worth it, and brought them to where they are today. They tell you all about things like orchestra, going to a music university and much more. They do skits, try new things, play games such as charades and sometimes just do weird but entertaining things that are just random.

Anyway, my favourite video has to be them remixing Canon in D by Pachelbel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5-cUYStyl8>

I also love the video where they joined in with Ray Chen, a world-class soloist and played 'Guess That Soloist'. They would imitate a soloist and the others would guess who it was. It was quite entertaining! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luLDw9m_4fg

TwoSet often do collaborations with amazing world-class soloists like with Ray Chen and Hilary Hahn. The cool thing is, Brett, Eddy, Hilary and Ray all started their violin journeys off as Suzuki students! TwoSetViolin are adventurous and make violin really fun. I really recommend their channel even if you don't play violin – they will really inspire you to love music, and most of all, to do more PRACTICE!



Welcome to Our Suzuki Family Elora Jane Mahony by Kylie Mahony

I would like to introduce my baby daughter, Elora to her Suzuki Family! Elora was born on the 6th of August 2020 and was 8.1 pounds (3.7 kg). She is a very healthy and sweet baby and I feel very lucky to have her!

Elora had a very special journey to me – I decided to become a solo mum in 2017, and it took me two and a half years of IVF to finally succeed in having her. She is a double donor baby, which means she was made from donor egg and sperm. I couldn't be happier or prouder of my little girl, and I look forward to telling her about her unique conception journey one day.

I hope some of you will get to meet Elora at the upcoming November Graduation concerts. I feel so fortunate to have our beautiful Suzuki community for Elora to grow up in. I know she will be loved and welcomed by all!

P.S. – Elora's rest position is already looking quite good!



Congratulations

Kylie

on the arrival of your
beautiful baby



Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? by Dr Mary Lou Sheil

Mary Lou Sheil (1934-2000) was a much loved General Practitioner and Paediatrician who lived and worked in Hunter's Hill, Sydney. She had endless compassion and understanding and became a refuge for those in need. She was also a talented musician. She played the piano and guitar and sang beautifully. In her final years of life she became a composer. She passed all the levels of the Suzuki piano teacher training requirements and then went on to become a teacher trainer. She was also a Suzuki mum and her daughter Deborah studied the violin. Deborah is now a violin teacher in Sydney.

Mary Lou was passionate about the Suzuki Method and was in high demand as a teacher and teacher trainer for Suzuki workshops and conferences around the world. She had a special gift for working with children and spent a lot of time working with children with special needs. She wrote many articles, including the one below about teaching music to young children, and was also involved in writing and recording a series of DVDs for the GympaROO Sensory Integration Program showing all the developmental stages of children from newborn to 5 years old. Mary Lou was held in high esteem by her Medical colleagues and the Suzuki Community. She is remembered for her beautiful musical compositions and tireless work for Suzuki Association of NSW. **Anne ApThomas**

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye?

The Dilemma – How Should We Teach Music To The Young?

by Dr. Mary Lou Sheil

introduction – why the question needs to be asked.

Before the advent of Kodaly, Carl Orff, Suzuki, the record player, the tape recorder and the video, this question was not considered because formal music training was not begun until a child could handle the written musical code, break it down, and translate it into motor action by playing his* instrument. Formal music instruction began when the child could convert the visual symbol  to the correct note on the piano, violin etc. For the average child this was at 7–8 years of age. For the “intelligent” child, whose ability to decode the written symbols had developed faster than average, this may have been earlier – at 5–6 years of age. The effect of early auditory training in the infant's and the young child's life was not recognised. The fact that musically talented artists' lives were surrounded by music in one form or another from birth was not seen as an important contributing factor in their success. Whatever the age of the child, formal music training was only considered when the child's eye was ready to read music.

Nowadays, children are starting to play instruments earlier and earlier, and in many instances their musical instruction is beginning at two and three years of age. At this young age their eyes are not ready to read music and they are learning by ear alone. This practice of teaching by ear alone has thrown the music teaching world into uproar, and much discussion, controversy, and criticism has raged over the rights and wrongs of this new method.

Kodaly was probably the first to throw musical educators into a flurry of excitement. He suggested that the ear must be trained first, and only when a child had learnt to hear a musical interval (e.g. a minor third) and could reproduce it vocally should he be shown the symbolic notation for it. He reversed the order of teaching from eye before ear, to ear before eye, but the one lead onto the other. In effect, he said that we had been putting the cart before the horse when we insisted that eye comes before the ear. However, when he got his horse in front he kept him in harness.

Dr Suzuki went much further. He said you must start training the ear much earlier. He took the horse out of the cart and refused to shackle it with the cart until it had travelled many miles and learnt much about the countryside. He suggested training the ear from birth, and the practical skill from two or three years of age. The child may play for three or more years before reading is introduced at 6–7 years of age. This practice produced not a flurry of excitement, but a hands up in holy horror of righteous indignation!

In this article we will look at some of the fundamental questions raised by these early music educators and see if, by looking at child development, we can gain some insight, and find some intelligent answers.

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

Questions posed by this new practice.

There are four main questions asked:

- Firstly – Should the eye be divorced from the ear in the early years of training? Should the horse be allowed to run free without the cart? The fear underlying this proposed divorce is expressed in the next question.
- Secondly – Will the child learn to read as well as his traditional peers? Perhaps the horse will refuse to work well in harness if left to run free early on.
- Thirdly – If it is alright to divorce the ear from the eye in the early years, when should reading be introduced? When should we put the horse in harness?
- Fourthly – If the ear can be trained so well so early, why not the eye? Look at the Doman early reading scheme.

These basic queries and fears appear in many forms and the answers are presupposed in many criticisms and derogatory remarks made about students taught by ear:

“He’ll never learn to read!”

“What use is he if he cannot read?” (This is usually muttered by conductors of primary school orchestras.)

“He’s just a little robot.”

The children in question usually hear these putting down remarks and through no fault of their own feel hurt and resentful.

Questions rephrased in terms of child development.

When child development is considered it is helpful if we restate these questions thus:

- A When is a child capable of using his body in a co-ordinated way to play an instrument? In this question we are looking solely at the mechanics of playing.
- B When is a child capable of sufficient auditory skills to play by ear?
- C When is a child’s visual system able to cope with musical symbols in such a way that he can read music and translate this reading into playing?
- D Is there a special period in a child’s development when each of these three functions of the brain are best trained? Is there a “prime time” for training co-ordination, auditory and visual skills?
- E If we leave out one area of skills training for a period, will it get left behind? Will the brain find it harder to gain visual skills if the ear is trained first?

Keeping these questions in mind let us look at child development under these three headings:

1. **Motor-sensory skills**, needed to play an instrument.
2. **Auditory and auditory-motor skills**, needed for the acquisition of language and music.
3. **Visual skills**, needed for the acquisition of reading and writing of speech and music.

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

1. Motor-sensory skills.

In the first three years of life the young child is very busy sorting out 'myself and my world'. When he is born he has no concept of 'separate self' – he seems to be one with his surroundings. He doesn't know that his body exists as such, nor that he has various components like arms and legs which make up that body. Gradually as he begins to move, to feel, to touch, to taste, to see and to hear he begins the process of forming a self image. Hands are discovered at three months, feet at six months, the concept of "I am" at about 12 months as he begins to walk. In his third year he learns to name some of his body parts, to count to three and distinguish his fingers.

In these same three years he has learnt to co-ordinate his body parts so that he can move at will through his world. This has been a slow sequential process from birth when he began with little ability to move at will at all. His movements were initially just whole body movements, often initiated not by his own effort, but by reflex activity (programmed movement patterns with which we are born). Gradually through these early months he begins to control his movement – first of his head, then of his upper trunk and arms, and lastly of his lower trunk and legs. He learns to put together different sets of muscles to produce patterns of movement at will – belly crawling on the floor, creeping on hands and knees, rolling, pulling up to standing, sitting up, walking, climbing, running. His movement patterns slowly become more refined, and eye-hand co-ordination moves from the clumsy attempts of the 3–5 monther to the adept grasping, letting go, pointing of the index finger and opposition of the thumb seen in the 1–2 year old.

As these skills needed for fine manipulation develop, the infant learns to play constructively with objects, to pass them from hand to hand, to build a tower with blocks, to hold a spoon and later a pencil, and by three years of age to draw a circle and a cross, to do form board puzzles, to string beads, do up buttons and play with the number of educational children's toys involving many small pieces.

By the age of three we find that these motor sensory skills have progressed to the point where independent, and controlled action of the fingers is possible, and the child can therefore manage the beginning repertoire of any instrument where the keys, holes or string intervals are close enough for their fingers to manage.

Some children, whose maturation rate is faster, achieve this level of motor-sensory control at two years; some may not be ready even at four years. We are not talking about other aspects of readiness for instruction like concentration, motivation etc. . . . we are simply saying that the mechanics for playing are usually ready at three years of age.

It is important to realise that although the rate of development is genetically set, many other factors will affect the rate of growth of proficiency, and also the degree of proficiency gained. Adverse factors will be illness, trauma, malnutrition, allergy, toxicity and poor stimulation or environmental encouragement. Beneficial factors will be the opposite – one of the most important in our society being adequate stimulation. If a baby is encouraged to move he will gain many messages from touch and the feelings from his joints and muscles about where they are in space – as his input increases, so will his ability to sort out these messages, and his knowledge of body image and concepts of space and time will begin to crystallise. If he moves poorly his brain will not receive this enriched input and will have a much harder task sorting out body image, time and space.*

* See end page 4 for reference.

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

2. Auditory and Auditory-motor skills.

The baby's hearing apparatus is sufficiently well formed by the end of the 7th month of pregnancy for the baby in the uterus to be hearing the sounds of mother's heartbeat, and her tummy rumblings. Sounds from the outside world, muffled a little by the thickness of abdominal and uterine wall, will also be reaching his ears. He has two months of intra-uterine sound experience before he reaches the outside world, where the fluid drains from his ears and he is exposed to all the full variety, complexity and intensity of the world of sound in which we live. His job in the first three years of life is to sort out the relevant from the irrelevant sounds in his world, to decode the complicated sound patterns of his native speech, to remember them, and to experiment with his own vocal muscles to imitate these meaningful sounds. He is so good at this that provided there are no obstacles in his path like glue ears or deafness, he will be speaking fluently by the end of his third year. In his first year he will do much sifting and sorting, and start babbling and experimenting with sound. At 12 months he will produce a few single syllables with meaning – "Mum" "Dad" and usually "No".

He adds many more and starts putting two words together – "Daddy go", "want drink", etc., and is soon talking in short sentences. These become more and more complex until at three he has become the inveterate asker of questions and often a great chatterbox. Children's rates of progress vary, and some will progress faster or slower than the average. As with motor sensory skills, the rate and path of progress is affected by the degree of stimulation. This is perhaps easier to see in the development of speech than it is in the development of motor sensory skills. The Japanese child learns to speak Japanese, the Australian to speak "Strine", the Balinese – Indonesian. He learns to decode only what he hears. What is more, if he doesn't hear human speech in these early years he does not learn to speak. The wolf children never learnt to speak. This tells us another very important point – the ears do their most important decoding work in the first seven years of life. Their ability to hear fine differences in sound diminishes as we move through late childhood and teenage years so that it is harder for us to pick up foreign languages through listening to speech alone as we get older, because we no longer hear the very fine nuances of sound which make up a particular dialect. So, the ears are at the height of their powers until the age of 7–8 years of age, and then seem to start on a slow decline. Keep this point in mind, we will return to it later.

Reference from page 3 –

* For those of you interested in this topic, the following books are recommended:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. "The Child from One to Six" | Ilg and James |
| 2. "Motor Development in Children" | Bretta Holle |
| 3. "How to Develop Your Child's Intelligence" | G. Getman |
| 4. "The Importance of being an Infant" | M.L. Sheil & M. Sassé |
| 5. "If only I'd known" | M. Sassé |
| 6. "The Clumsy Child" | Arnheim & Sinclair |

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

3. Visual Skills

When discussing the development of visual skills it is important to realise that there are five main areas to consider. The first four of these concern the refinement of eye muscle movements, perception of visual detail, visual memory and translation of visual messages into motor action. There is a fifth visual skill, perhaps better called a higher brain function skill, which concerns the child's ability to recognise that a visual symbol can be used as a code for something else – that writing is a code for speech, and music notation a code for sound. It is interesting that when we look at the evolution of man we note that speech was present for a long time before writing appeared on the scene. Written language is a very 'Johnny come lately' skill, and in fact has not been developed by many peoples living at stone age levels in today's societies. Tribal people who have no contact with civilisation still use only pictorial language – not coded written symbols to convey everyday speech. It is not surprising then to find that the ability to decode written script either for speech or music is not found in the young child but has to await the development of higher brain function in the older child. In fact a child is usually 7–8 years old before he can do this decoding with any ease and has to be trained continuously for 3–4 years before he has such fluency in this field that he is regarded as literate. (Children are regarded as literate in our society if they achieve the reading level expected of an 10 year old).

But let us look now at the other four visual skills which are necessary for the mechanics of reading and writing, or reading and playing an instrument.

(a) The refinement of Visual Movement.

To be able to read a child must be able to track along a line and move from the end of one line to the beginning of the next, without losing his place. He must be able to move his eyes from the page to his instrument and back again, to the blackboard in a classroom and back again without losing his place. He must be able to stop his eye movement and fix his gaze at a particular point along a line of notes or words to absorb what is in that area (usually 2" wide on a page) for comprehension.

He must be able to focus accurately and swiftly as he alters his range of vision from near targets to far distant ones.

The baby at birth can do none of these things – he moves his two eyes together, and he has a natural focal length at which distant objects will be in focus, but he has no control over his eye movements or his focusing apparatus. This control develops slowly. If you have taught 6–8 year olds in class you will know their reading is helped if they have a ruler under the line they are reading, or a finger moving along the music or words as they read. Why? Because the control of their eye muscles is not yet good enough to keep their place without it. The movements of 'move and stop/fix', that are required for reading are called "sacchades", and good sacchadic movement is not usually well developed until the 7th to 8th year. Children with reading difficulties are often in trouble in this area.

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

(b) The refinement of Visual Perception.

To be able to read accurately a child must be able to perceive the “just noticeable differences” (“J.N.D.s”) in the variety of written symbols he will encounter. He must be able to see on which line, or in which space a note lies, whether the movement in a sequence is up or down or stationary.

He must be able to notice a , , or  sign when they appear, to see the difference between  and , or  and , and .

He needs to tell accurately how many symbols there are in a group of notes:



The ability to notice “J.N.D’s” in visual stimuli grows slowly from birth. A seven month baby may cry when picked up by a stranger – he notices the face is different, where the younger baby, who was happy to be picked up by anyone, did not. Simple form boards of a circle, square and a triangle can be correctly and quickly completed by the two year old – more complicated form boards e.g. of circus animals and figures, at 3 to 4 years. As they progress from 3 to 8 years they begin to notice the difference between visual symbols – between m and n, or h and n, or b and d, or c and e, and they then acquire the ability to see the just noticeable differences in sequences of letters, between hat and hot, or house and horse.

These perceptive skills needed for coping with the accurate fluent decoding of letters and notes are usually *not well developed* before 7 years of age. Nor does a young child perceive these just noticeable differences if the symbols are too small or too close together. The size of the script used first needs to be much larger than adult script – the younger the child, the larger the script. Doman uses letters 10 cms tall and one centimetre wide for the two year old. As they progress through infant and primary school, children cope with smaller and smaller print, until at the 10 year old stage of competency they can cope with newspaper printing and are regarded in our society as “literate”. Fluent reading of small script may not be expected before this stage of literacy has been reached. Many children will reach this stage before they are 10 years old – many with learning difficulties will reach it much later, if ever.

(c) The development of visual memory for sequences.

A child must be able to hold the memory for the perceived pattern (of what he has just read) whilst looking ahead to the next pattern. When reading aloud with fluency, we are speaking the words of one section of a sentence whilst reading the words of the next section in our head. Likewise with fluent music reading we are playing notes already decoded whilst our eyes are digesting the next phrase to be played. This ability is not well developed until the 8th year and beyond.

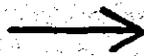
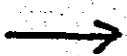
Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

(d) The refinement of translation of perception to motor action.

A child must be able to see a visual symbol accurately, comprehend it, store it as long as need be and *translate it into accurate motor action*. This translation into motor action presupposes the earlier development of the motor sensory skills mentioned earlier, viz. for a child must be able to move fingers at will, must know the feeling of how far it is to the next note, and must know which finger is moving in which direction, and which hand is involved, though they may not be able to quickly identify it as right or left.*

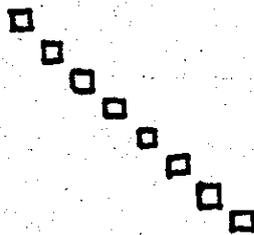
As pointed out earlier these motor sensory skills are well developed long before the visual skills, usually in fact, by three years of age. Were it not so Dr. Suzuki would never have got off the ground in his attempt to teach three year olds by listening and imitation.

The translation of visual symbols into motor action is a much more complex brain function than playing by ear, and it has to await the further brain development of the older child. This later development of accurate translation is seen if we look at some of the tests devised by psychologists to assess reading readiness. One such educator, Mary Haworth, has devised a visual motor test† where children are presented with a number of simple shapes, and asked to copy them. The test shape is drawn big, between 4 and 10 cms square in size, and is left in front of them whilst they copy it.

Given an arrow to copy, the four year old does not manage to make an angled point but gives the arrow a square head. Thus  becomes . The five year old manages the angulation but may confuse the direction. Thus  becomes 

The seven year old copies the arrow accurately.

Given eight squares just under 1 cm square each, and arranged diagonally with even spaces between the squares –



the four year old copies the squares accurately but does not get the spacing, direction, or the number right; the five year old has little idea of spacing, and although the direction is right, the number is wrong; the seven year old is accurate in direction and spacing but still inaccurate in number. Remember, this is not a memory test – just a copying test.

* Knowledge of Right/Left is not well internalised until 7 years of age. Until this time reversals are common, b^s for d^s etc.

† Primary Visual Motor Test by Mary Haworth.

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

Given a picture rather like a train line going into the distance horizontally so that the sleepers, drawn as cross bars, become shorter and shorter and closer together,



the 4 year old fails to make the two rails converge and has no idea of the different spaces between the cross lines, nor the right number of lines; the five year old breaks the line up into individual rhomboids of increasing size; the 7 year old conceives the convergence well but does not copy the varying distances between the crossbars. Mary Haworth states* that many children will see their finished product as wrong and say "My drawing isn't the same as yours" or "I can't get that right". Their visual perception is ahead of their translation into action. The normal 7 year old can pass this test and Mary Haworth has correlated success in this test with reading readiness – children who perform below the 7 year old norm are in problems with reading.

There is a fair analogy to be made between reading a visual symbol and translating this perception into the motor act of copying, and reading visual symbols and translating them into the motor act of playing notes. Both copying and playing involve the translation into motor patterns of movement – it is perhaps debateable which is the more complex task.

Conclusions to be drawn from the study of the Child Development.

From this brief discussion of the sequential nature of the development of the various skills required to read and play music, we can answer both original sets of questions. To take the questions rephrased in terms of child development first.

- Q. A. When is a child capable of using his body in a co-ordinated way to play an instrument?
Usually at 3 years of age – i.e. at a 3 year old level of maturation.
- Q. B. When is a child's auditory system ready to listen, remember and reproduce musical sequences?
At 3 year old level of maturation.
- Q. C. When is a child's visual system ready to cope with musical symbols in such a way that he can read music and translate it into playing?
At a 7 year old level of maturation.
- Q. D. Is there a prime time for teaching skills in these areas?
Yes – Co-ordination – 0 to 8 years
Auditory – 0 to 8 years
Visual – 5 to 12 years.
- Q. E. If we leave out an area of skills training will it get left behind?
The answer is twofold –
No – if it is introduced in its prime time.
Yes – if we leave it too late and pass the prime time.
The further we move outside the prime time the harder it will be to pick up those skills.

Now let us return to our original questions.

* Ref: page 4 of "The Primary Visual Motor Test".

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

Q. 1. **Should the eye be divorced from the ear in the early years of music training?**

The answer is 'Yes' – because you are in prime time for training the ear, but not in prime time for the eye. After all we speak long before we read books so why should we not play instruments as well as sing before we read music?

Traditional teachers waiting for eye skills to mature before starting instruction gamble on the development of auditory skills in their students. We should all be concerned to develop these auditory skills in the young child and not leave it to chance – we should be using auditory prime time. Fortunately, thanks to the work of many skilled educators, early music programmes are appearing everywhere, and we should be giving them all the support we can – whether they are based on Kodaly, Carl Orff, Dalcroze, Suzuki or Yamaha. Each differs but has as its basic aim the training of musical skills in the young child.

A fear expressed about this divorce of ear and eye should be considered at this point. If you separate the cart and the horse, will they ever get back together again. Will the player by ear ever harness himself to the written music? Again that fear can be answered by another question. Did fluency of speech prevent you from reading? 'No – it helped my reading. Because I already knew the sounds of the words and also their meaning, I only had to match the written symbol to the sound.' In learning to read there was only one additional task. In traditional teaching children have to learn the elements of sound (intervals of pitch and rhythm) at the same time as they have to learn the symbols for these elements and their way around their instrument. This involves three tasks at once. It is consequently often slow.

Q. 2. **Will the child learn to read as well as his traditional peers?**

Q. 3. **If the ear is divorced from the eye, when should reading be introduced?**

These two questions can be answered together in this way –

A player by ear will learn to read easily and well IF:

- Reading is introduced in "prime time", when the visual skills are sufficiently competent to manage the task.
- There are no problems in the child's visual skill abilities.
- Motivation is present.
- Sufficient practice is done.

Each of these qualifications needs some discussion.

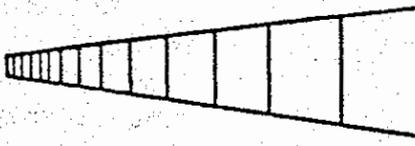
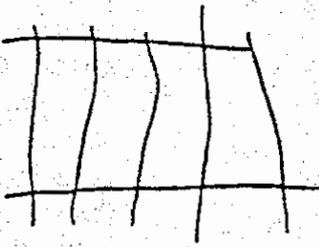
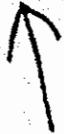
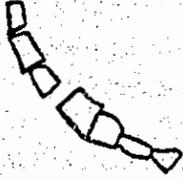
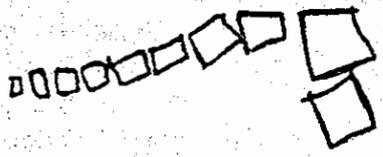
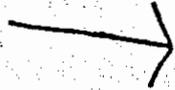
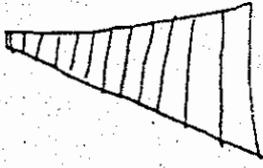
(a) **Introduction of Reading must be done when vision is in its prime time.**

There are two approaches we can use here.

The first approach introduces reading skills in music at the same time as introducing reading skills in language. Kodaly has done this beautifully and there is no better early music education available in Australia than a combination of Carl Orff or Kodaly (or its brilliant adaptation for Australian children by Deanna Hoermann and Doreen Bridges), and Suzuki programmes.* If you have taught Kodaly in school you will know how well this programme keeps child development in mind – motor sensory skills, concept formation and visual symbolic representation are all beautifully matched to the child's maturation rate.

** The writer leaves out Dalcroze and Yamaha only because of lack of first hand knowledge in the use of these two systems.*

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

<p>Arrow</p>  <p>Test figure</p>	<p>Steps</p> 	<p>Railroad</p> 
<p>Normal 4 year old copy</p> 		
<p>Normal 5 year old copy</p> 		
<p>Normal 7 year old copy</p> 		

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 GRUNE AND STRATTON
 AUTHOR MARY HAWORTH, 1985

From Mary Haworth's "The Primary Visual Motor Test" pages 2 and 3, 44, 8, 7 respectively.

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

If you as a teacher are alone in the responsibility of teaching your student to read music you will gain much help from the child's progress in reading language. When a child can decode simple words (not just recognise their shape as in Doman early reading) they can decode simple phrases; when they are blending two of these letters to make a sound they can decode two and three note chords and so on.

The second approach we can use does not bother with early introduction of music symbols, but waits as traditional teaching has done, until the eye skills are matured sufficiently at 7 to 8 years of age to cope efficiently with the visual symbols. The maxim here is that music reading can begin when you have seen that the child is reading competently in school – at a 3rd grade standard. The skills needed to read music have all been practiced in the child's learning to read language, and at 7 to 8 years of age they can handle the extra concepts involved in note reading easily.

(b) **No problems with visual skill development.**

Whichever approach is used, failure will occur if the child's visual skills are below par. These students are also in problems with reading at school, and a quick question about their school progress usually alerts the teacher to tread warily.

In the traditional system where playing is dependent on reading music, these students quickly drop out – and amongst them are many very musical children who then miss out on developing their talents. As they are already failing in the visual skills dependent world of school this is a worse tragedy – because they feel a double failure and their self esteem takes another dive. These children with poor visual skills should be encouraged to play by ear, and to improvise until such time as their visual skills can cope with reading. If this is done, instead of failure, the child will find an area of success and this will help him in his overall battle to achieve a satisfactory place in this world.

In the Suzuki system these same children come to grief when reading is introduced, and will be very resistant to any pressure to acquire what for them is an almost impossible skill. Once again the alert teacher will ask what progress is being made at school – and quickly determine whether the child has problems in this area or whether the resistance comes from a lack of motivation as explained below. The approach, if visual problems are present, is the same – keep the child going with the auditory learning, find out where the child's visual skills are at – introduce reading at that level slowly, or wait for motivation and/or remedial help to improve his skills.

(c) **Motivation is present**

Whereas children are easily motivated to learn to read and write the spoken word, there is sometimes found a resistance to music reading in children who can play well by ear. Firstly they may say "Why bother?". Secondly they are often made to feel that they are going back to baby days because the music they read and play is so infantile compared to the music they play by ear. In these instances the fact that they can already play may hamper their desire to read. Teachers and parents have found a variety of ways to motivate their students to read – each student has to be stimulated a different way. Some are interested in the written symbol from the beginning and should be encouraged; some want to compose and write it down; some want to play in orchestras or groups; some want to explore new music. So, it behoves each teacher who uses an "ear only" approach in early years to see that their student becomes musically literate as they get older, and to provide adequate motivation.

Eye Before Ear or Ear Before Eye? continued

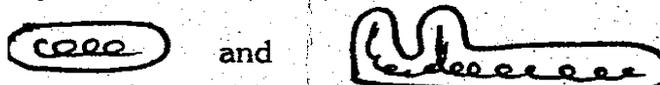
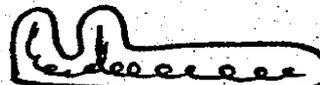
d) Sufficient Practice

Practice makes perfect still holds – and any child beginning to read after playing by ear for a number of years must understand that reading is an added skill. How long did it take them to learn to read language and how much practice was necessary to accomplish fluency? Teachers must insist that reading music becomes a solid part of each practice session, and encourage their students to read through as much music of different styles as possible. The pieces used are for many years much easier technically than the music they are currently learning by ear so the sensible teacher does not insist on perfect performances – these easier pieces are being used to gain a new skill – that of finding the music hidden in a code. They are not being used to develop technique.

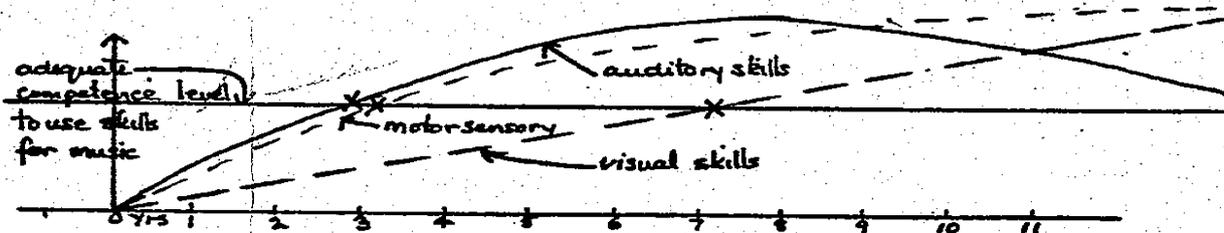
There remains the fourth question –

“If you can train the ear early, why not the eye too?”

What of Doman teaching the 2 year old to read? I hope the answer to this question is self evident from what has been said already. But there is a little more to add. Doman type early reading depends on form perception. Car and television are seen primarily as

 and . The difference between ‘horse’ and ‘house’,

requiring much finer perception of ‘just noticeable differences’, is not seen till a child is older. Nevertheless, providing too great a strain is not put on the immature visual system, and symbols are kept big and simple, their perception can be trained with practice, and the more complex skills may arrive earlier than 7 years. However, there is a word of caution here from vision experts who are already worried about the visual load we put on young children before the age of 7 to 8 years. More than one educator has been heard to say that we should not be sending our children to school before 7 years of age because the immaturity of these very systems means we are putting too much strain on the visual system when teaching reading and writing before this age. This applies particularly to the male of our species.



Summary

The sequential nature of child development can be looked at as a graph, showing the rate of development of competence in the auditory, motor sensory and visual skills. It is then easy to see that the answer to the question posed in our title is:

Ear before eye – until the eye is ready. Let the horse run free until the cart is properly built, then join the two together.

Suzuki Talent Education

M.L. SHEIL
March '85

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VIOLIN CASE

- Black full-size with maroon velvet interior in very good condition
- Includes hygrometer gauge, several compartments and locations for 3 bows
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Do you have any music items to sell?

Members can advertise in our newsletters for free.

Email the Suzuki Office with a description, price and photo.

info@suzukimusic.org.au

Diary Dates 2020

Note that these events are subject to change due to COVID-19 restrictions.

We hope to reschedule and replace some cancelled events so keep an eye on your emails for updates.

Term 1

Saturday 29th February 2020	Sydney National Conference enrolments and concert auditions due	
Sunday 15th March 2020	All Comer Piano Concert - cancelled	Immanuel College, time TBA
	Studio Spectacular Rehearsal - cancelled	Immanuel College, 3-5pm
Sunday 29th March 2020	Studio Spectacular Concert - cancelled	Immanuel College Chapel, 2pm
Friday 10th April 2020	Graduation applications due - N/A	
18th - 20th April (holidays)	Sydney National Conference - cancelled	Abbotsleigh College, Wahroonga NSW

Term 2

Sunday 31st May	Graduation Concert 1 - cancelled	Concordia College, time TBA
Sunday 28th June	All Comer Piano Concert - cancelled	Concordia College, time TBA
	Suzuki Workshop - cancelled	Concordia College, 3-5pm

Term 3

Monday 20th July 2020	Showcase audition videos due - N/A	
Sunday 30th August	Showcase Rehearsal - cancelled	Concordia College, 3-5pm
	AGM - TBA	Concordia College, time TBA
Sunday 13th September	All Comer Piano Concert	Concordia College, time TBA
	Showcase Walkthrough - cancelled	Concordia College, 3-5pm
Sunday 20th September	Showcase Concert - cancelled	Elder Hall, 2pm-3:45pm
Friday 25th September	Graduation applications due	

Term 4

1st November	Graduation Concert	Concordia College, 1:15, 2:15, 3:30, 4:30
29th November	Online AGM - joining instructions to be emailed	Online via Zoom, 1:30pm
13th December	All Comer Concert for Anne's studio	Concordia College, 1:30pm



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Anne ApThomas (President)
Therese O'Brien (Vice president)
Kylie Mahony (Secretary)
Ann Vanden Driesen

2020 Suzuki Council Parents

Joan Mahony (Treasurer)
Jane Mangos
Mary D'Arcy

Administrator

Emilie Owens
PO Box 378 Mitcham S/Centre
Torrens Park SA 5062
E: info@suzukimusic.org.au

Office hours:

The office attends enquiries via email - info@suzukimusic.org.au

For urgent enquiries please call Anne on 0401 685 730

www.suzukimusic.org.au

2020/21 Membership Fees

2021 Earlybird (EB) deadline 7 Feb
Term 1 Starter \$120 (EB)/\$150.00
Term 2 Starter \$112.50
Term 3 Starter \$75.00
Term 4 Starter \$37.50

2021 Newsletter Copy Deadlines

Term 1, 2021 - Friday 29th Jan
(Friday week 1 - earlier preferred)

Members Advertising

Non-commercial notices
• Free for Suzuki members
• Non-members \$15 each
Enquiries via email.

Advertising

For commercial advertising in the Suzuki SA Newsletter, please contact Emilie Owens for advertising guidelines and costs. (info@suzukimusic.org.au)

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Suzuki Music SA is classified as a charitable organization under ATO rulings. Therefore, all donations made to the Association of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

Accredited Teachers

Cello			
Camden Park	Therese O'Brien	Trainee	0431 570 707
Sturt	Jenny McDonald	Trainee	8358 3694
Harp			
Hawthorn	Anne ApThomas	Teacher Trainer & Dip. of Suzuki Talent Educ.	0401 685 730
Piano			
Hawthorn	Anne ApThomas	Teacher Trainer & Dip. of Suzuki Talent Educ.	0401 685 730
Blair Athol	Monica Christian	Dip. of Suzuki Talent Educ.	0413 992 945
St Agnus	Sarah Porter	Dip. of Suzuki Talent Educ.	0424 115 859
Henley Beach Sth	Ann Vanden Driesen	Certificate IV	0419 827 930
Violin			
West Lakes/Glandore	Kylie Mahony	Teacher Trainer & Dip. of Suzuki Talent Educ.	0427 745 657
Sturt	Jenny McDonald	Certificate IV	0410 441 974
Woodville South	Sonia Treagus	Certificate III	0423 874 100
Eden Hills	Vicky Yagi	Certificate III	8370 2312
Flagstaff Hill	Sian Williams	Trainee	0417 836 179
Mount Barker	Nadia Buck	Trainee	0412 605 442
Flute			
St Agnus	Sarah Porter	Certificate IV	0424 115 859
Recorder			
St Agnus	Sarah Porter	Teacher Trainer & Dip. of Suzuki Talent Educ.	0424 115 859

2020 Suzuki Music SA - Annual General Meeting

Invitation to Members

All Suzuki Music SA Association members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting

1:30pm

29th November 2020

Online via Zoom

Join the meeting at <https://zoom.us/join> or use your Zoom App

We will email you in the preceding week with a Zoom meeting ID and password.

The AGM will include the presentation of reports from the president and treasurer as well as general discussion and feedback.

The Suzuki Music SA Association belongs to us all and in order to improve our association, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

If you are interested in being a council member, please complete the nomination form below and email it to the Suzuki office by 22nd November. Council meets once a month and comprises 4 teacher and 3 parent members.

Sincerely,

Anne ApThomas President



Suzuki Music SA info@suzukimusic.org.au

Nomination for Council

Annual General Meeting of Suzuki Music SA

Sunday 29th November, 1:30pm

Online via Zoom

NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL 2021

Please note that in completing this form, parent members need to be nominated by parent members and teacher members need to be nominated by teacher members.

We hereby nominate to be a parent / teacher (please circle or underline one) member of the Suzuki Music SA Council for 2021.

Nominated by:

(name)

(signature)

Seconded by:

(name)

(signature)

To be completed by the nominee:

Iam willing to be nominated as a member of the Suzuki Music SA Council for 2021.

Signature of nominee: Date:

Scan and email to info@suzukimusicsa.org.au or post to Suzuki Music SA, PO Box 378, Mitcham Shopping Centre, Torrens Park, SA 5062, by 22nd November.

Thank you.

Access all Suzuki forms at this link on our website:

<https://suzukimusic.sa.org.au/forms/>

Keep an eye on your email for the **release of the NEW 2021 Membership form**
Join before 7th February 2021 to secure the special early-bird rate!

Suzuki SA Family Membership 2020

Suzuki Music SA is a non-profit association of teachers and families dedicated to the principles and philosophies of Dr Shinichi Suzuki. Families with children learning the Suzuki method are expected to become members of the association so that they can experience the full benefits of a Suzuki education including:

- Access to high quality, trained teachers and resources
- Access to a wide variety of performance and enrichment activities including ensembles, group lessons, workshops, concerts, Winter Festival, Showcase, Suzuki graduation, Interstate Suzuki schools, and Suzuki world conventions.
- Quarterly e-newsletter and free classified listing for buying and selling instruments.
- Being part of an international network of Suzuki families.

Family membership is for all students learning from a Suzuki teacher and covers all members of the family. Make payment before February 9th 2020 to receive the special EARLY BIRD rate.

At the end of this form, you will be asked to make payment via direct deposit using your own online banking facilities.

It is easier to make the payment beforehand so you don't need to leave the form.

Here are the details:

Amount: \$150 for the full year, \$112.50 for starting with your teacher for the first time this year in term 2, \$75 for starting with your teacher for the first time this year in term 3, \$37.50 for starting with your teacher for the first time this year in term 4. If you graduate in 2020, you must pay the full year rate regardless of when you started lessons.

Account: STEAA (SA)

BSB: 633-000

Account number: 1483 14859

Reference: your first name surname membership

Other payment methods are accepted if necessary. Where possible, please deposit cheques and cash directly at a Bendigo Bank branch using the above payment details.

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*Email address **

Your email address _____

*Are you a brand new member? **

yes

No

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