

# SANC

## *Newsletter*



*For Teachers, Parents, and Students  
in the Suzuki Association of Northern California*

**October 2009**

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### **Suzuki Association of Northern California (SANC) 2009-10 Board of Directors**

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*Membership Directory  
and Website Coordinator*

Dorothy Lee

SANC is a branch of the Suzuki Music Association of California (SMAC)  
Check out the SANC website at <http://suzukinorcal.org>

*The Suzuki Method = Ability Development =  
Talent Education = The Mother Tongue Approach*

# All About SANC

## Suzuki Association of Northern California

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The SANC Board meets regularly to keep our Suzuki ship on calm seas.

Calvin Murasaki's term as President for 2008/2009 has expired. Yoko Acheson has been our representative to SMAC for the past several years and has now come on board as the SANC treasurer, a hard and often thankless job.

So many thanks to Calvin for his year as President, and to Yoko, who has jumped from one whirlwind into another. Our new President is Crissa Volhontseff, who is beginning her third year on the Board.

SANC's function is to plan all the special events in which our children participate for their growth and inspiration. Please see the Calendar of Events for the full roster of activities.

One of them is Graduation. The graduation process was explained fully in the previous two SANC Newsletters. Please refer to them again (for those who did not receive them, you can find them on the SANC website: [suzukinorcal.org](http://suzukinorcal.org)) as there was much detail about this exceptional event. There will be more in this newsletter as well.

Other events include the annual

Peninsula play-in, the summer Stanford Suzuki institute, and the Camp Campbell overnight, which is about to take place on the 26th and 27th of September. We also provide ongoing education for our teachers by sponsoring a Teacher Workshop every spring.

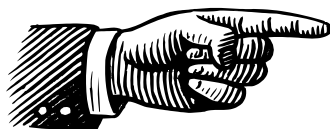
All Suzuki student families are invited... no, urged... to join SANC for two reasons.

The first is very practical; with a Membership, the fees for the various events listed above are reduced (and in some cases, scholarships are provided). The second is to join in supporting a wonderful system that is part of the larger scheme of Talent Education in the Americas — in the World, for that matter. Without the wonderful support we receive from our parents, we could not thrive.

- Jan Bogart

**Haven't renewed your SANC membership yet?**

*Just fill out the form on the next page and return it with \$15 payable to your child's teacher.*



# SANC FAMILY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Suzuki Association of Northern California (SANC)  
Fiscal Year July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010

New     Renewal

Please PRINT.

Family Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_, CA Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name	Instrument	Teacher

Benefits of being a SANC Family Member include receiving the SANC Newsletter and enjoying reduced fees for Graduation and the Regional Stanford Play-In (for Peninsula students).

How do you prefer to receive announcements, newsletters, forms, and information?

- Via e-mail  
 Via US Postal Service

**Return this application along with \$15 payable to your child's teacher.**

I am including a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support SANC events.

# 2010 Graduation: Coming Soon!

Many thanks to Diane Egli for her invaluable service over the past few years as Graduation Chairman for SANC. Nora Grafton, our new Graduation Chairman, reports that negotiations are still under way for the venue and exact date of our February concert. It is expected that the date will be in January or early February, as usual. Watch the website for an update.

The SANC Board has sanctioned a new two-pronged plan to liven up the Graduation Concert as follows:

1. All grads will perform not only their latest graduation piece, but all previously performed grad pieces. For example, Mozart grads will join everyone down to Gossec *Gavotte*. This requirement will be introduced in February. What a thrill this will be for first time grads as well as others! Begin your review *now*.

2. Beginning in 2011, we intend to open the concert to *everyone* by scheduling extra pieces, even for those who have not yet graduated. Since this will allow the younger children to play more than one piece and to be inspired by hearing the more advanced students, the extra minutes added onto the program will be well worth it.

More details will be published in the next newsletter and on the website.

Teachers, please note: It is up to you to make certain that your student is fully prepared to play the graduation piece fluently. Descriptors as listed on the website must be followed. The recording must be received on or before November 15th and be labeled properly to pass. There will be no exceptions.

**All 2010 Graduation CD/Tape Submissions are due November 15.**

Please mail to:

Nora Grafton

751 Thomas Lane

Walnut Creek, CA 94597

## *Special Thanks*

to the following Event and  
Project Coordinators!

*Advanced Institute at Stanford:*

Celia Vollov  
& Yoko Acheson

*Camp Campbell:*

Diane Egli

*Graduation:*

Nora Grafton

*Newsletter:*

Jan Bogart

*Peninsula Play-In:*

Joan Ling-Zwissler  
& Mary Bormann



# 2009-2010 Suzuki Events Calendar

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October 25, 2009	<b>Peninsula Play-In</b> Dinkelspiel Auditorium at Stanford University
November 15, 2009	<b>Graduation CDs/Tapes Due</b> (See article on page 4)
January or February 2010	<b>2010 SANC Graduation</b> (Exact date and location TBA)
April 2010	<b>SANC Teacher Workshop</b> (More details TBA)
April 15, 2010	<b>Nominations for new SANC Board members</b> must be submitted to President in writing
May 1, 2010	<b>Financial Aid applications</b> for Summer Institutes due
June 1, 2010	<b>Ballots for SANC Board elections</b> must be received by President in writing
June 15, 2010	<b>Registration forms due for Stanford Institute</b> Late fees will be applied after this date
July 6-9, 2010	<b>Northern California Suzuki Institute</b> Santa Rosa, CA
August 8-12, 2010	<b>Advanced Suzuki Institute at Stanford</b> Violins: Book 4 and up Cellos, Violas: Book 3 and up
September 25-26, 2010	<b>Camp Campbell Family Overnight</b> Boulder Creek, CA Repertoire, Jazz, Fiddling, Orchestra/Chamber, Recreation, Campfire

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# Removing the Guesswork

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A traditional teacher investigating the realm of Suzuki Talent Education will usually be struck first by the brilliant structuring of the Suzuki music volumes. Imagine taking the guesswork out of the building blocks for teaching a child to play an instrument as complicated as the violin. Imagine taking the guesswork out of what music to assign in order to move on to the next skill... or for that matter, which skill to work on next. Dr. Suzuki spent many years developing the repertoire for the violin volumes, carefully analyzing how to acquire a new technique and how to refine it in subsequent pieces, always in the context of repetition. The books were later expanded to include other instruments: viola, cello, string bass, piano, harp, flute and guitar.

From Twinkle right up through Book 10, the progression is clearly laid out, which isn't to say that by merely using the music in order, the Suzuki method is being embraced... far from it... but it is one giant step in the right direction. In the golden olden days, teacher training did include course work, mostly in the form of lectures and demos. But we mainly flew around from teacher to teacher to watch and absorb how the magic was imparted. I was a traditional teacher in conversion; everyone was during the earliest days of Suzuki in the USA!

My first 'aha' moment came when I realized that the bow could be moved quickly by young children from the start, with tiny bows as in 'taka taka ta ka'. This, I thought, is true genius. The common traditional start involved using long, lugubrious bows which the student could not regulate. I discovered that one can eliminate that less-than-enchanted, out-of-control sound during the initiation period by substituting something quite manageable, gradually expanding and evolving according to the natural acceleration rate of each child in combination with his or her practice habits. It also had the function of initiating restraint in movement. It is far more difficult to go from large to small motions than the reverse. Again, sheer brilliance.

As the Suzuki Violin books are being reissued, it is apparent that the international committee working on the volumes sees no reason to quarrel with Dr. Suzuki's work (at least through Book 4, the latest volume in the new series), other than adding a piece in Book 4 which many teachers have, in the past, used as supplementary material. Some stylistic changes are added, mainly altered bowings intended to more closely match what is thought to be the composer's intentions, plus the correction of a few wrong or misprinted notes. However, none of these changes alter

*(Continued on page 7)*

# Musical Magic at Stanford 2009

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The 2009 Advanced Suzuki Institute at Stanford was a huge success! From the first play-in, when everyone met Yoko Potter and her witch companion, the excitement began. The witch insisted on hearing a certain piece before she would leave the stage satisfied. Yoko Potter helped lead the students in an enchanted “Witches Dance” and saved the day.

As the week progressed, the students amazed audiences with their outstanding playing. Everyone delighted in the music by Vivaldi, Kabalevsky, and Lalo among others. Of course,

## Removing the Guesswork (cont.)

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Dr. Suzuki’s original concept of adding skills in logical order.

Ultimately, through his sequential arrangement of music in tandem with the realization that all children are talented, Talent Education was born. The teaching of music was revolutionized.

Dr. Suzuki got it right. We can all be thankful for his philosophical genius as well as his astute attention to musical detail.

- Jan Bogart

one of the highlights was the faculty concert. “The Hot Canary” was a favorite, as well as the Rondo from *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*. Everyone that attended participated in this last piece.

Enough cannot be said about the friendly atmosphere and fun activities. While visiting the classes, one could hear violinists discovering the viola, violists learning new techniques, cellists polishing their repertoire, and everyone exploring new orchestra music. The parents also extended their help and support. The students left Thursday after an exciting concert ending in a grand finale of the “Toy Symphony” played by all students, teachers, and faculty. After this incredible week, we hope to see everyone back next year. The 2010 Advanced Suzuki Institute at Stanford will be held August 8 -12, 2010. The new brochure will be online in February at the SANC website: [www.suzukinorcal.org](http://www.suzukinorcal.org).

If you have any other questions, send email to: [stanfordsuzuki@yahoo.com](mailto:stanfordsuzuki@yahoo.com). Prepare now for an outstanding musical experience, and join us for Stanford 2010 — a small institute with a big feeling!

- Celia Vollov



# All I Needed to Know About Playing My Instrument, I Learned in the Twinkles

## Using Known Pieces and Techniques to Introduce New Pieces and Techniques



*The following article by Esther Tyree Mertz is reprinted for studio use only with permission of the American Suzuki Journal.*

In 1988, Robert Fulghum published his book *All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. In subsequent years, other authors threw their proverbial hats into the ring with variations on a theme. To all the parents, teachers and students who have struggled with the Twinkles, here is my version of that concept. With the thoughts and musings that follow, I hope to encourage teachers to continue their efforts to learn new and more effective ways to guide students toward success. I also want to encourage families to persevere, realizing that the *hardest part of their journey is often at the beginning*. [Ed: my italics.]

The skills that are acquired in the process of learning the Twinkle Theme and Variations fit quite nicely into the categories that Ed Kreitman lists in his book, *Teaching from the Balance Point*. These skills, as he lists them in priority, are **posture, tone,**

**intonation, musicianship,** and **learning the notes to new pieces.** I made a chart of this list and hung it in my studio. It serves as a visual reminder to me, my parents, and my students of where we are in the learning process. In any given lesson, they can remind themselves of these steps and their importance as an integral part of daily practice.



The first thing a student learns is proper **posture**. Regardless of which instrument is being learned, the placement of the instrument and/or the position of the child to the instrument with the accompanying proper hand positions are vital to the success of the student. Whether learning the first variation or any of the subsequent pieces, finding and maintaining the correct posture is a skill that is learned during Twinkle and all its variations. Without proper posture it is very difficult if not impossible to add new skills and advanced techniques. Correct posture also aids in the production of good tone and intonation, the next items on the list.



## All I Needed to Know... (cont.)



With knowledge of posture and many lessons on placing and holding the instrument, the child then begins the process of learning how to create a good **tone**. Whether *arco* or *pizzicato* the Twinkles provide the experience and understanding of how to allow that particular instrument to sing with a ringing tone and how to listen for those tones. The different variations give the opportunity to learn how to find the open string sound of the violin with fast bows, stopped bows, and eventually long and connected bows. The student then progresses to correct finger placement for good intonation in other pieces.



With the careful placement of fingers and development of listening skills, the foundation is being laid for good tone and intonation on all strings and in all positions, as well as a foundation for intermediate and advanced techniques. Open string tone was the quality of sound Dr. Suzuki always encouraged students and teachers alike to find and reproduce. This tone is first learned on the E and A strings and then when consistency is achieved, the D string is added, followed by the G. Using the twinkle Variation and Theme is a good starting point, since the ear of the student is attuned to the rhythms and melody notes of this piece.

**Intonation**, the placement of the fingers correctly on the string in order to have the combination of accurate pitch and ringing tone is introduced when the student begins learning the sequence of notes in the first phrase of Twinkle Variation A. Using Dr. Suzuki's practice of "stop, prepare, play," the coordination of finger, bow and string crossings are all learned. This approach is used with the goal of finding the ringing tone on each note. With practice and games of repetition, children gain the ability to be very quick with these changes and develop acute "hearing" in their fingertips. This helps them to find the right placement for the best intonation. Finding new notes and the best intonation on these notes is less challenging when the Variations are started on different open strings and then eventually with different fingers in preparation for new pieces. Many a student has gained renewed interest in keeping the Twinkles as part of their daily practice when the challenge is given to discover how to play them in a known key but starting them on a different finger. For instance, playing Twinkle Variation A in the key of G but starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger on the D string instead of the open string. Not only does this give the student ear training in new tonalities and theory development, it also provides a great opportunity to



## All I Needed to Know... (cont.)

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use 4<sup>th</sup> fingers and low second fingers.



When students are able to play the variations and theme without stops between the notes, they are allowed to play them in group class where the next priority, **musicianship**, is learned. Following the leader, expression, dynamics and interpretation are all often first learned in group class as the child continues to master the Twinkles. The older students are probably playing the second parts, giving students' ears introduction to harmony and ensemble playing. They are also practicing and preparing for performances and recitals and learning about respect for the performer.

If your group classes are similar to mine, then theory and improvisation are an integral part of the sessions, with the Twinkles becoming the starting point for our understanding of rhythm, melody and the creation of new compositions. When a student has become proficient with the written variations, I give the assignment to create their own variation to share at the next group class. Most children do this without hesitation. However, for those who need a little nudge to get started, I suggest they start with their name or some combination. If their name is similar to one of the Suzuki varia-

tions, we talk about using their middle name, last name or some combination. Children get very excited about practicing different ways to put their name into sound and often continue creating new variations that they want to show off at subsequent lessons. In later lessons, we branch out into left hand changes to the Twinkles, incorporating passing tones, trills, and sequences of notes from other Book One pieces such as May Song and Allegro.

The last item on the list is the **new piece**, including notes, bowings and rhythms.  Unless your students are the exception, this is the favorite part of their practice time, whether it's the next Suzuki piece, a piece of their choosing, or a tune they have written. There is something fun and challenging about learning new pieces, and the Twinkle Variations and Theme give us the perfect platform for continuing to develop this skill. In a nutshell, the only things to be learned after the Twinkles are new notes, rhythms and bowings.

In my years of teaching and studying I have learned to use the knowledge acquired in the Variations to teach new techniques or assist students in learning new notes with a measure of independence. I now consider them my etude book and regularly use



## All I Needed to Know... (cont.)

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them to introduce the unknown concept in an upcoming piece. For example, a student was recently struggling with the bowing on page one, mm 24-27 of the Vivaldi a minor concerto, 1st movement. We broke down the sound of the rhythm and recurring notes and then created a Twinkle variation to practice that sound and note pattern. Within a few repetitions, he had the bowing correct and then was able to play the passage correctly. Slurs, hooks, new rhythms, fingering, positions, double stops and other new techniques can all be practiced first using the Twinkle Theme and Variations, allowing students to gain a measure of confidence with the unknown concept before trying to set it in the new piece.

Robert Fulghum's book reminds us that kindergarten was the place where understanding of life, learning, and social graces started for most of us. This article is intended as an overview of how the lessons on the Twinkles open for the student the gate of learning for ability development on the instrument and valuable lessons for life. I have used the violin as an illustration; however, the principles apply to all instruments, and I have found the anecdotes equally beneficial and exciting for piano students. Though not meant to be a definitive list of all that is learned in the early stages of lessons,

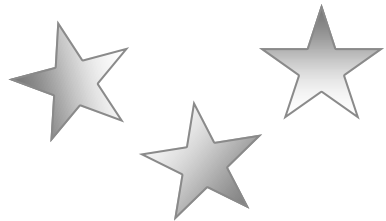
these are experiences I have had in my journey as student and teacher. It is the wisdom I have gleaned from delving into the philosophy and methodology of Dr. Suzuki. As you are starting out on your journey or continuing to develop musical ability, may the ideas presented here encourage you to keep the Twinkle Variations and Theme a part of your daily practice and weekly lessons.

- Esther Tyree Mertz

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**Suzuki Association of Northern California**

1589 Hopyard Road

Pleasanton, CA 94566