



THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUZUKI ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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<https://www.suzuki.org.za/>
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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

As we begin 2026, the South African Suzuki Association warmly welcomes all our teachers, families, and students to a new year of growth, music-making, and connection. There is a wonderful sense of momentum in our community, and we are excited to share the journey ahead with you.

We extend our sincere thanks to Louis van Manen, who has served as our treasurer for the past eight years with dedication and care. We are also delighted to welcome Ian Barnard as our new treasurer.

February brought exciting progress, with our teacher trainees completing their first module in Johannesburg. We also celebrate a special milestone in KwaZulu-Natal, where Guillem Calvo presented a Suzuki workshop for violin students from Durban and Pietermaritzburg—a first for the region, and we trust the beginning of many more across the country.

We look forward to Module Two taking place in Cape Town in early April.

We remind all Suzuki member teachers and families that you are welcome to observe training sessions free of charge. To book, please email suzuki.association.org.za.

Teachers are also encouraged to revisit Level One or Two training at no cost if already qualified at a higher level—an excellent opportunity to gain fresh insights and deepen your understanding of the Suzuki philosophy.

As Shinichi Suzuki so beautifully said, “Where love is deep, much can be accomplished.”

Warm regards,

The SASA Editorial Team

MEET THE SASA TEAM

In each of our upcoming newsletters, we will introduce you, the reader, to our SASA committee members.

Our fifth introduction is our new Treasurer, Ian Barnard.

Dear SASA Families,

I'm pleased to introduce myself as the newly appointed Treasurer of the South African Suzuki Association. It is a privilege to be part of a community that places such a strong emphasis on nurturing young musicians and supporting their journeys.

By way of background, I studied accounting and completed my articles at PWC, after which I ran my own practice for a number of years. I later moved into various executive roles in Finance and Procurement within listed companies, working across industries including Insurance, Information Technology, and Rail Infrastructure. Through this, I've developed a strong focus on governance, financial sustainability, and building organisations that can support their communities over the long term.

Beyond the professional side, music is very much part of our family life. I play piano, guitar, and drums, and more recently I've taken up the violin alongside my daughter, Annabel, who is currently learning through the Suzuki method under the guidance of her teacher, Maria Meyer, at Laerskool Jan Celliers in Johannesburg. Experiencing the journey as a parent—and as a beginner again myself—has given me a deep appreciation for the Suzuki philosophy, as well as the dedication and quality of its teachers, pupils and parents. My son is a chorister at Drakensberg Boys' Choir School, so music forms a central part of our home.

I'm looking forward to contributing to SASA in a way that supports both its sustainability and its continued positive impact on children, teachers, and families. It's clear that this is more than just a music programme—it's a community, and I'm excited to be part of it.

Warm regards,
Ian Barnard

A TRIBUTE

As the seasons change, so do our teams. We would like to pay tribute to **Louis van Manen**, our Treasurer for six years (2020-2026).

I have always had a deep love for violin music. Although I do not play an instrument myself, I leave that to those with the necessary talent.

I met Lee Marais Nel when my eldest son started school and was in the same class as her daughter. She later approached me about the treasurer position, which provided an opportunity to use my financial background for a meaningful cause while remaining close to the world of violin music.

Increasing responsibilities at my workplace, BDO, as well as at home, meant that I needed to step back from certain commitments. As a result, I have decided to step down as Treasurer of SASA.

Along the way, I have had the privilege of meeting many remarkable people –



individuals with generous hearts and exceptional musical talent – which has truly broadened my horizons. I wish SASA every success in the future and am confident that it remains in very capable hands.

Louis van Manen

NICOLETTE SOLOMON

A musical journey

The musical journey of Nicolette Solomon-Van Wyk (née van der Spuy) began as a child in Port Elizabeth where Prof. Neil Mackay instilled a deep love for violin and ensemble in her. Then in Cape Town, where, at just 13 years old, she was studying violin at the College of Music in Cape Town. One day, her father returned from a European music festival with a small blue book – Nurtured by Love by Shinichi Suzuki. What seemed at first like an unusual gift soon became the spark that would shape her life.

As she dived into the little blue book, Nicolette found herself deeply moved by Suzuki's philosophy. Though her teacher at the time dismissed the idea outright, she held onto that sense of wonder and curiosity.

With quiet determination, she even began writing letters to Dr. Suzuki in Japan, enclosing delicate watercolor paintings – never imagining that those letters would one day be treasured.

Her path took her to Johannesburg at 16, where she studied under Alan Solomon, whose openness and encouragement helped her passion flourish. Inspired, she began teaching from her family home and, by the age of 21, had founded the first Suzuki school in Africa. It was a bold step, taken with heart more than experience, but it laid the foundation for something remarkable.





Further studies in Lyon eventually led her to Japan, where a long-held dream came true: studying with Dr. Suzuki himself. In a moment she would never forget, she was welcomed into his home, where his wife gently brought out the very letters and paintings she had sent as a young girl. It was a quiet, profound affirmation of a journey guided by persistence and belief.



Back in South Africa, her school blossomed into a vibrant musical community. Saturday mornings were filled with music, creativity, and connection, often ending with shared “koek en tee.” Her work helped nurture not only skilled violinists but also a generation of teachers and a growing Suzuki movement across the country.



Years later, life's challenges led Nicolette and her family to the United States, where she joined the Suzuki Music Institute of Dallas as violin and viola teacher and director of ensembles. She was then appointed as Executive Director and President of the Music Institute, where serious fundraising and International performance tours became a focus. There, she found a new musical home – one rich in collaboration, friendship, and shared purpose. Her students and their families became an extension of her own.

Now based in Dripping Springs, Texas, she continues her work through the Monticello School of Talent Education, as well as Orchestra Technician in the Dripping Springs School District, carrying forward the same spirit that began with a small blue book so many years ago. In a meaningful continuation of her South African roots, Nicolette is generously sponsoring two teacher trainees from Masi Music Project in Fish Hoek through the Solomon Suzuki Scholarship. These two former Masi students – now teachers themselves – are being supported in completing their Suzuki Violin Teacher Training, ensuring that the gift of music, and the philosophy that shaped her life, continues to ripple outward for generations to come.



WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SUZUKI COMMUNITY?

My name is Chido, and I am a Suzuki teacher based in Harare, Zimbabwe. I run a strings studio where I teach both violin and cello, working with students of varying ages and levels to develop not only technical ability but also a deep love and appreciation for music.

This past year has been a vibrant and activity-filled one for my studio. In May 2025, the Zimbabwe Suzuki Association hosted a Suzuki Music Mini Camp, bringing together several Suzuki teachers from across Zimbabwe for an immersive three-day workshop for our students. Students took part in group classes and masterclasses, gaining fresh perspectives while learning from both teachers and one another. It was especially rewarding to see their confidence grow and their enjoyment of music deepen. The camp concluded with a concert for parents on the final day, a joyful and proud moment for all involved. In the National Institute of Allied Arts Musical Eisteddfod a total of 22 students from my studio took part, performing in both solo and ensemble categories.

From duets and trios to quartets and full school orchestras, it was wonderful to see them step onto the stage with confidence, supporting one another and growing through the experience.

Watching each student grow in their own way, both musically and personally, remains the most meaningful part of what I do. I look forward to continuing this journey and sharing many more musical moments together in the year ahead.





it's easy to picture a violin group lesson—everyone arrives with their instrument, ready to play together, and the music flows naturally.

Piano may seem to present a different challenge. People often ask Sonnika Venter how Suzuki group lessons work for her piano students.

Group lessons are offered in addition to individual lessons for all students, from Pre-Twinkle to Book 5. Core elements such as tone, posture, articulation, dynamics, and hand position are developed through Twinkles, scales, and Book 1–5 repertoire. Singing gives the playing direction, separate hand play-alongs on multiple pianos at one time, require both focus and excellent articulation. Older students refine and polish review pieces into confident, artistic performances, while younger beginners are inspired by the beautiful playing of their peers.

Regular group lessons, create consistent opportunities for shared learning and motivation. On 21 March 2026, students gathered at the Frank Pietersen Music Centre for a vibrant session focused on triple (3-pulse) rhythm. Through engaging activities and games, students explored pulse clarity, tone shaping, and expressive phrasing. At times, up to nine pianists shared three pianos, fostering teamwork, listening skills, and a lively group dynamic.

Older students added depth by performing duet parts, and a highlight was a mother-daughter duet of Allegro on two pianos—beautifully reflecting the Suzuki spirit of collaboration. After a short break, the day concluded with a student concert, where confident performances and spontaneous contributions created a joyful, celebratory atmosphere.

Events like these show how Suzuki piano group lessons successfully blend creativity, discipline, and community—bringing the philosophy to life through shared music-making.

Photo: Stefan Sonnekus

GUILLEM CALVO IN KWAZULU-NATAL

By Carol Solomon

A Landmark Visit: Guillem Calvo in KwaZulu-Natal

The recent visit of Guillem Calvo to KwaZulu-Natal marked a significant and inspiring moment for Suzuki education in our province. Believed to be the first visit by a Suzuki teacher trainer to the region, his presence will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on both teachers and students.

Guillem began his visit in Durban at Durban Girls' College, where he worked with Louise Howell and her students. Observing his teaching and the enthusiastic response from the pupils was a privilege, with group classes proving especially engaging.

From there, we travelled to the Midlands, where despite delays on the N3, the programme continued the following morning at Lions River Primary School. Learners from the school and surrounding community participated in a lively and enriching group class, with additional private lessons offered.

The visit continued at The Wykeham Collegiate, where Guillem presented a short recital with Nigel Fish, followed by a parent talk and a vibrant group class that



brought together children from several schools. After a full and rewarding schedule, we returned to Durban before departing early the next morning from King Shaka International Airport for Johannesburg, where the Violin Teacher Training course began.

We extend sincere thanks to all the schools, teachers, and families who made this visit possible. Most importantly, we thank Guillem for his generosity, inspiration, and dedication. The joy and responsiveness of the children throughout his visit were a powerful reminder of the lasting value of the Suzuki method.



Guillem Calvo visit to Durban

The visit to Durban by Guillem Calvo, the renowned UK Suzuki violin teacher, was an unprecedented treat. It is seldom that we get such esteemed visitors to Durban, and Guillem made a huge impact on the violinists at DGC in a very short time. He immediately put the students at ease with his fun group lessons and his kind, nurturing, relaxed manner. Altogether, Guillem taught five advanced pupils (Trinity Grade 7 and 8 level) and ten Suzuki Book 1 pupils.

Considering he was with us on a Wednesday afternoon, it was heart-warming to see how many so many dedicated parents had taken time off work to attend the workshop. The parents were amazed at how quickly the children achieved the lesson point Guillem was working on and how quickly their playing improved.



We were especially grateful for the session with Guillem today. It did so much to foster confidence, skill and pride, not to mention musical prowess. Thanks again. Much love, Aarti.

EVERY PARENT CAN

Every child can ... but can every parent?

In the Suzuki method, the relationship between parent, teacher, and child is deeply important. When that partnership is strong, it creates a supportive foundation for meaningful learning and growth.

As teachers, we are always looking for ways to guide and encourage parents, especially when it comes to making practice time at home more efficient and positive. I recently came across a lovely article by Suzuki teacher Holly Blackwelder Carpenter, and I thought it offered such thoughtful and practical advice that it would be wonderful to share.



A few weeks ago, I received a text message from my brother (Suzuki parent with 3 children).

It read: “I know every child can, but I am not sure that this parent can.”

Have you ever felt like that? I know that I have.

The biggest challenge faced by the Suzuki method is that we no longer live in the 1950's. When the method began, most families were single-income and one parent stayed at home to care for the house, the children, and of course practice.

My brother hit the nail right on the head: every child can, but can every parent? It is not a question of ability or desire, it is a question of time.

I asked a few families in my studio, and I found most of them looked like this:

Somewhere around 7:00 or 7:15 am, the parents left for work, and the children left for school. One parent and children would return, in the best case, around 16:30 and often not until 17:30 or 18:00 at night. At this point, by the time they arrived home, the family had been away from the house for ten or twelve hours, they were tired and hungry, and there was still homework to be done. Supper had to be eaten, cleaned up after, laundry done, and that was the best-case scenario, if traffic wasn't bad. Then there are the lessons to get to, the swimming to go to and one other physical activity for the week. Now, when should this typical family practice in order to achieve 7 days' practice a week? What should they cut out of their lives? There is really nothing to cut.

Perhaps this schedule sounds familiar. Maybe even a little bit like yours. If so, I would like to share some ideas with you that have helped the families in my studio.

1. Write out your schedule. Try to schedule your music lessons on the same day if possible.
2. Are there any parts of the practice that the child can do independently? Bow holds in the car or in the kitchen while you cook? Can they review with the recording while you prepare supper? Talk to your teacher and have them assign independent tasks that your child is ready for.
3. Adjust expectations. Consult with your teacher, let them know if you, as a parent, can only do 4 days a week. Ask them if the child can practice and review on their own on the other 3 days for just 5 minutes.

Hire a practice sitter. Is there an older student that the teacher can recommend to practice with your child once or twice a week when you cannot?

Write out a family schedule, put in practice time and see where you are at. Don't give up on 7 days of practice a week. Set an alarm for practice time, because if you decide to do it after cleaning the house, I have bad news: the house can always take more cleaning, and you have to decide to stop cleaning and start practicing.

The next step is super-efficient: focused practice. If you aren't sure how to do this, ask your teacher. If they can recommend for you a parent and child team who does especially effective practice and watch and learn.

Lastly, and most importantly: Constant, honest communication with your teacher about how the week went. If there was a school program or a PTA meeting, or you were sick one day and only three practice sessions occurred, your teacher needs to know. Parents let me know these things at the beginning of the lessons so I can adjust my teaching and my expectations for that lesson.

In my lessons, we are constantly evaluating if we are making the most of the limited time available to each family.

The final key for today's busy family came in the form of an article that I recently read. It went something like this: I asked my child: "Do you enjoy practising?" He looked confused. "Not really," he said.

So I asked him: "Do you not like to practice?" "No", he said, "I don't really mind practising."

His response was much the same as if I had asked him if he enjoyed doing his math homework or if he wanted to quit math because he didn't like it. It is not an option; it is just part of his day, so he never really considers whether or not he likes to practice.

We have come to treat music lessons as if they are optional. If our child doesn't like them, we can quit. If we don't have time as the parents, that is what can be cut out of our schedules. If the budget is too tight, cut the music lessons. If music is optional, the parent and the child will come to treat it as optional.

So the first question you must ask yourself in order to find out if you, as the parent, can is: are music lessons optional for your family? If the answer is "yes," then you will struggle in the practice room. But if the answer is "no," and both you and your child know it, then practise for both you and your child will immediately become easier.



Make a list of the things you want your child to learn through music. Things like focus, determination, perseverance, self-confidence, joy, and respect, to name just a few. Then ask yourself: where else will my child learn these skills? And if music is the best place to do that, then it truly is part of their education.

The **second** question is, how long should the education last? Eventually, even if we don't want to, we all have to quit music lessons. As a five-year-old, I begged my parents for violin lessons. So my mother sat me down and said, in our family, we don't quit. If you want to take violin lessons, you have to take them every week, and you have to practice every day until you're in 8th grade. Should we start? And I enthusiastically said: "Yes, let's do it!"

Now, lest you think I was an angel to practice with, I know that on at least one occasion, maybe more, it took both parents to practice with me. One to discipline, the other to practice, but it never occurred to me that we would not practice. When I graduated from 8th grade, my mother said, likely with a bit of relief, "Ok, you can quit violin now." My reply: "Are you kidding me? I just got good at this!"

The **third** thing you need to realise as a parent is that arguments are not about the violin. When your child is pushing back in the practice room, it has to do with their relationship with you. Practice just happens to be the time they have your undivided attention. The practice room is the place where boundaries are defined, independence is tried, and buttons are pushed.

The instrument is merely the vehicle used to see if the rules really do apply. As a busy parent, the decision to practice is the decision to hammer out your relationship with your child. Realise that if they don't work out those boundaries now, the only other option is later. Think "teenager" – and get into the practice room.

The reality was, I loved practising with my mother, but I didn't always act like it. Here's the other thing – I don't remember those bad practice sessions. I only remember the good ones. As a parent, I realised I needed to offer that same bit of grace towards my child. When I approach the practice room, I take time to remember a good practice, where technique was improved, the relationship between the two of us was positive, and music was appreciated. As a parent, if I go in with an attitude of dread, stress or short on time, I have created a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Our biggest strength in the Suzuki method, I believe, is that we are not living in the 1950's. Today, more than ever, families need to have a reason to spend time together, away from the computer, work, and hectic life.

The opportunity to be required to spend 30 minutes a day with your child as part of their education is a blessing, even though sometimes it is very well disguised.

So, can every parent? Make a schedule, decide that music education is not optional, communicate with your teacher, hire a practice sitter, take a deep breath, think positively, think of your child as a teenager, and go for it.

I am a Suzuki parent, and I happen to believe that every parent can.

**Holly Blackwelder Carpenter A Suzuki teacher since 1995,
directed the Japan Seattle Suzuki Institute from 2010-2018
and served on the SAA Board from 2014-2016.**

**Holly is currently the Strings Director at Rogers Adventist School
where she directs three orchestras and teaches a
full studio of private violin students.**

SUZUKI VIOLIN TEACHER TRAINING (MODULE 1)



The Suzuki Violin Teacher Training, held from 20–23 February at Jan Cilliers in Gauteng, was an inspiring and enriching experience for all who attended.

The 4-day course brought together teachers from across South Africa and Zimbabwe, creating a vibrant space for learning, collaboration, and musical growth.

The schedule was full and engaging, with in-depth philosophy discussions that revisited the core principles of the Suzuki method.

Participants explored the teaching points of the Suzuki repertoire in detail, gaining fresh insight into both technique and musical expression. Masterclasses for students and teachers alike provided valuable, hands-on learning opportunities, allowing everyone to refine their skills in a supportive environment.

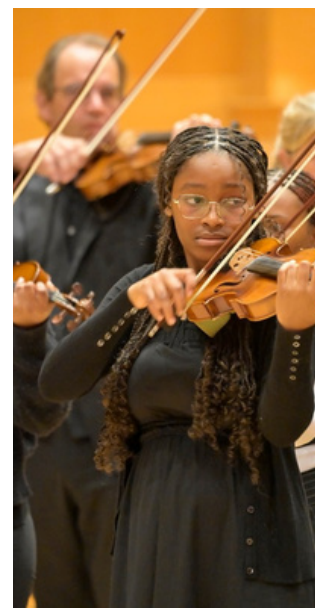
Attending the course left participants feeling invigorated and inspired. There was a shared sense of gratitude for the opportunity to study under teacher trainers of such high calibre.

The second module will be presented in the Western Cape from 9-12 April at Frank Pietersen Music Centre. Observers are welcome to observe the sessions and play along.

EVENTS 2026

Be sure to diarise the following events:

Teacher Training **20-23 February & 13-18 July** (Gauteng)
Teacher Training **9-12 April & 24-28 September** (Western Cape)
Cello workshop & Suzuki introduction **9 April** (Western Cape)
Suzuki Concert **31 May** (Johannesburg)
Annual National Suzuki Concert **24 September** (Western Cape)
September Fun Suzuki Day



SASA COMMITTEE 2026



CHAIRPERSON
Sonnika Venter



COUNTRY DIRECTOR
Carol Solomon



TREASURER
Ian Barnard



ADMINISTRATOR
Andrea Kreuiter



COMMITTEE MEMBER
Renée vd Westhuizen



COMMITTEE MEMBER
Rina Francis

*Your time and dedication
are the heart of our
organisation.*

ZERO MEMBERSHIP FEE INCREASE

We are delighted to confirm that there will be
no increase in SASA membership fees for 2026!

This is likely to be the final year that membership can be offered at the current rate, and we are pleased to extend this courtesy to our members as a gesture of appreciation for your continued commitment to Suzuki in South Africa.

To register is an easy 2-step process:

1. Fill in the online form (found on www.suzuki.org.za or here: [REGISTER NOW](#))
2. Send POP to suzuki.association.sa@gmail.com

Banking Details

South African Suzuki Association

Standard Bank

Menlyn Branch

Account No: 424324806

Reference: your name & membership

POP: send to suzuki.association.sa@gmail.com

Membership Queries

Contact Andrea Kreuiter at

[Suzuki.association.sa@gmail.com](mailto:suzuki.association.sa@gmail.com) / akreuiter83@gmail.com / 064 659 1998

R550 per year	A-Membership Fully qualified Suzuki teachers (ESA-level 5, ESA Diploma)
R550 per year	B1-Membership ESA level 3 or 4 (ESA Accreditation)
R550 per year	B2-Membership Suzuki teachers with ESA level 1 or 2
R550 per year	B3-Membership In training for ESA level 1
R350 per year	C3-Membership Friends of Suzuki Association SA (interested, but not actively teaching)
R350 per year	C1-Family Membership
R350 per year	C2-Friends Membership

SASA MEMBERSHIP

Take Pride in Being Part

The South African Suzuki Association (SASA) is affiliated with the European Suzuki Association (ESA), meaning that your SASA membership automatically includes ESA membership. We warmly encourage both teachers and students to join our national association and become part of this wider Suzuki community.

As a non-profit organisation, SASA reinvests all membership contributions directly into workshops, events, teacher training and the continued growth of the Suzuki Method in South Africa.

Benefits of Membership

- A wealth of expertise, experience and friendship from all the Suzuki students, parents and teachers in our community through inter-studio interaction and various functions.
- Participation in the Annual National Concert and masterclasses at Teachers Training sessions with our ESA Teacher Trainers.
- Other ad hoc functions such as Suzuki Saturdays, Twinkler's tea parties.
- Suzuki workshops and parent talks.
- The knowledge that with your membership, the Suzuki Method will continue to grow and develop.



STAY UP TO DATE

Let's grow our Suzuki online community 🌱🎻

Did you know that the South African Suzuki Association now has official social media pages?

These platforms have been carefully set up by dedicated volunteer committee members to help share news, resources, and inspiration from across our growing Suzuki community.

Now, we need your help to make them thrive!

By simply **liking, following, sharing,** and **subscribing,** you can play a direct role in growing SASA's online presence.

A STRONGER DIGITAL FOOTPRINT MEANS

***Greater awareness of the Suzuki Method in South Africa**

***More parents, teachers, and students**

discovering the joy of learning through this philosophy

***An easy way to stay connected, celebrate successes, and share updates with friends and family**

👉 Your action makes a difference. Each click and share helps us reach more people who may benefit from Suzuki education.

Follow SASA today, invite others to join, and help us spread the joy of Suzuki across South Africa! 🎵



YouTube

