

# Suzuki Voice Programme celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2007

## What is the Suzuki Voice Program?

- It has been specially designed to learn vocal technique and style in a progressive manner
- It enables a student to start listening to songs during pregnancy and continue singing until adulthood.
  - The Program has been developed in Finland since 1986. The original voice students have followed in the Program already for 20 years.
- Official Suzuki Voice Teacher Training and exams (five levels) have been conducted in ESA since 1998 and in PPSA since 2001. Suzuki Voice short term courses have been conducted in SAA since 2005. There are trained teachers in 15 countries including America, Australia, Europe and New Zealand.
  - By singing the repertoire, the students and teachers are able to learn from one another's countries and to understand more about their different cultures and languages.

## Unique features of the Program are:

- on everyday singing
- development of a natural voice, listening and supporting linguistic ability
- parent orientation
- work with families
- special lessons
  - group lessons
  - family lessons
  - individual singing lessons possible from the age of three
- recording individual singing lessons
- special singing exercises
- singing different languages from the age of two
- performing at an early age
- book and solo recitals, concerts, fairy tale operas, singing days, regular family evenings, concert trips, workshops and international conferences
- accreditation through an international exam system for teachers

## Development from childhood to adulthood and beyond

### The voice is an instrument

The Suzuki Voice Program teaches children aged prenatal to adulthood. It begins with the understanding that **the voice is an instrument** and **each student's individual needs will be addressed**. Early vocal instruction begins in groups however all voice students progress to individual lessons at a very early age and are encouraged to perform as soloists when they are ready.

What starts in childhood is an acceptance of **classical music** and **singing styles** which are not usually introduced to students until much later. They learn to be relaxed natural singers – a great building block for the development of mature vocal students. Natural, silent breathing is encouraged and developed along with repertoire. Phrasing and beautiful tone are main teaching points in lessons – not just learning songs. Memory and performance skills are established early and progress accordingly. As the child’s vocal skills develop, reading is introduced as a separate skill – just as you learn to speak before you learn to read, you learn to sing well before you learn to read music.

In the beginning, the Suzuki Voice Program can be used as a method that enhances interaction between a parent and a child (during pregnancy → age 2). The teacher leads the activity in lessons and supports the relationship between the mother/father and the baby. The parents are taught the early steps of their child’s instrument. They are taught to listen and to feel comfortable singing the early repertoire. As the child becomes more independent (age 3 →), the interaction between a child and a teacher increases and the role of the parent will be more observing and supporting in lessons. Individual lessons in addition to group lessons are encouraged at this stage.

The Suzuki Voice teacher needs to understand the normal stages of child development to support the personal development of each child and awaken a love of music through singing. The aim of the Suzuki Voice Program is to begin with simple folk songs and graduate to more challenging levels of classical songs. In this way the student learns both musical and technical skills while being introduced to a wide range of classical vocal repertoire.

## **Suzuki Voice lesson format**

- Bow
- Listening, concentration
- Practical work for stretching, posture and breathing
- Practical work for tongue, jaw and lips
- Vocalization (depending on the age of the student)
- SINGING (individual or in group)
- Nursery rhymes (babbling) using finger puppets in Book 1 and 2
- Movement, dance, acting
- Practising performance (solo recitals)
- Colouring pages for songs in Book 1 and 2
- Ball massage, relaxation
- Bow

## **Listening, imitating and repeating**

“The first principle concerns musical education for developing an ear for music. An ear for music is something which has to be acquired by listening, and the sooner this begun, the more effective it will be. Work together with encourage and enjoyment, there will be much success for the good of the children.” Dr. Suzuki believed that talent is not inborn but is developed by creating the right environment and nurturing ability. He believed that all children can learn. His philosophy is simple. Create the right environment and a child will learn. Listening begins in the womb at 18 weeks gestation. This is when the ear begins to hear external sound although the actual ear is not yet fully formed.

**Listening** –A recording of the student’s current pieces are listened to daily. These are recorded by the chosen expert and will be the student’s main teacher of the pieces themselves. They teach notes, words, style, phrasing, memory.

**Imitation** – At a lesson the teacher picks out a section or phrase to work on and the child is taught by imitation how to sing it.

**Repetition** – this phrase is mastered and then repeated in the lesson and with the parent’s help is repeated further at home before the next lesson. The small step approach is very important in order to reward the student with confidence to go on. If a well-chosen single step is mastered in a lesson very often the child returns the following week with the whole piece ready to perform “Ability, breeds ability!”. Many games are used to imitate a section and encourage repetition. These are passed on to parents so that they too are empowered to encourage repetition at home. Children are taught from early age “How to practise and what to practise!”

## Suzuki Voice Repertoire

**Book 1 (Volume One)** Folk songs predominantly accompanied by piano with piano (or guitar) doubling the melody line. As interests young children, the songs are about animals and daily activities. These pieces are learned in the child’s native language first. Book 1 also includes parents songs – some of these may not be sung by the children at all. In Book 1 we encourage a child to use her / his voice and begin to sing. This is not a pre-instrumental class but one which focuses on learning voice as an instrument. However musical ability is created and therefore many students readily take up other instruments as well. **Book 2 (Volume Two)** More folk songs accompanied by piano or guitar. Languages and part singing in canon and harmony are introduced. For the very young children, the teacher or parent may sing a duet part but older children can sing these together. **Book 3 (Volume Three)** Art songs by well-known composers are introduced. These are short pieces accompanied by a chamber orchestra of five instruments. **Level Four: Song list (selected books)** The main focus is on songs from around the world and art songs of the student’s own country. Antiche arias and Vaccai Vocalises are introduced and lieder and art songs of well-known composers are included in the list. This level is longer than the others and continues into the student’s teenage years. The level is achieved by performing one individual recital and two “Youth” recitals. **Level Five: Song list (selected books)** A more specialised focus on the repertoire including art songs from other countries (the main ones where Suzuki Voice is taught) and the opportunity to study and perform an operatic or musical role (e.g. Hänsel und Gretel in German, El Gato con Botas in Spanish).

There are no exams for students in Suzuki Voice Program – the reward of learning is learning itself and the experience of performing for others from an early age (book recitals at the completion of each book level, graduation recital, performances for family and friends, teachers’ recitals, Suzuki Association concerts, Suzuki workshops, festival, conventions – performing together and learning from visiting teachers). There are five exams for teachers. One exam level takes about 1—2 years.

## Acceptance to the Voice Teacher Training

In order to be accepted as a teacher-in-training an audition videotape and resume in English should be submitted. The resume should include tertiary qualifications in classical voice studies, professional performance and teaching experience. **Audition requirements: Unaccompanied pieces:** “Schlafe mein Prinzchen” (Mozart’s Lullaby) by Bernhard Fliess (in German) and “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” in your language. **Accompanied pieces:** Vaccai Vocalise # 7 “Come il

candore”, Lied of your choice, Aria from opera or oratorio of your choice. *Piano playing skills:* Mozart’s Lullaby melody with accompaniment.

## **Memories from Turin 2006**

14<sup>th</sup> Suzuki Method World Convention was held April 12—17<sup>th</sup> 2006 in Turin Italy. It was great opportunity for Suzuki Voice students to sing together. We felt like a big Suzuki Voice Family. Suzuki singers came from Argentina, Australia, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Spain and Sweden. The teachers were Katrina Pezzimenti from Australia, Mette Heikkinen and Dr. Kukkamäki from Finland. Two Suzuki Voice teachers’ exams were held in Turin. This was the convention schedule: Thursday April 13<sup>th</sup>: Teaching day, Mervi Sipola-Maliniemi (Finland) Level 3 recital, Group from Finland and Catalan present, lesson with the Harps, Concert “Hänsel und Gretel” with Stefano Tempia orchestra at Conservatory G. Verdi of Turin. Friday 14<sup>th</sup>: Teaching day, Group from Argentina and Australia present, Mervi-Sipola-Maliniemi (Finland) Level 3 teaching examination, International “Songs for Sharing” Recital with the Harp group and pianist Marjaana Okkonen at Sant Filippo Church. Saturday April 15<sup>th</sup>: Teaching day, Margret Ponzi (Italy) Level 2 teaching examination and recital, Group from Iceland and Sweden present and Final Concert for Voice including Solo-songs. Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>: Children Concert. Monday 17<sup>th</sup>: Two Farewell Concerts.

## **Time to celebrate!**

Book One English and Spanish translations have been internationally accepted by qualified Suzuki Voice Teachers and advisers around the world after 20 years of work.

Katrina Pezzimenti (Melbourne Australia) was appointed as an ESA Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainer in London September 2007. Mary Lou Hofer (Stevens Point, USA) became the first ESA level 4 teacher from SAA. Congratulations to both Katrina and Mary!

**“Songs for sharing” – International Suzuki Voice Workshop will be held in Finland June 25—29<sup>th</sup> 2007.** A new Children’s opera **ROOPE** has been composed by Timo-Juhani Kyllönen for Suzuki Voice Students. The opera will be performed in Vantaa November 18<sup>th</sup> 2007. Both celebrations will be open to Suzuki voice students and teachers around the world. The next “Songs for sharing” workshop will be held in Argentina 2008.

I wish all Suzuki Voice teachers, students and families around the world great 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year from my heart!

Dr. Päivi Kukkamäki