



MNjcc Suzuki Program Teacher Bios – 2020-21 season

Gretchen Paxson-Abberger – violin, viola, improvisation, Artistic director of MNjcc Suzuki Program, MNjcc Suzuki Summer Music Camp



Gretchen Paxson Abberger holds a Bachelor of Liberal Arts from Bennington College, a bachelor's degree in Music Performance from the Manhattan School of Music, and a master's degree in Historical Performance from the Mannes College of Music in New York City, as well as a 2-year Long Term Certificate in Suzuki training from the School for Strings in New York City studying with Louise Behrend. Further teacher development has been short-term training courses with the following: Ronda Cole, Daphne Hughes, Allen Lieb, Carol Smith, Ed Sprunger,

Carey Beth Hockett, Brian Lewis, and Alice Kay Kanack. Gretchen has been teaching privately, free-lancing, as a guest teacher at Suzuki workshops in the Toronto area since moving here in 1994. She has also taught for the Southwestern Ontario Suzuki Institute, and Camp Noronto. She teaches all levels at the North York Suzuki Program, as well, is the artistic director for the Miles Nadal Jcc Suzuki Program, now in its 29th year, and directs the MNjcc Suzuki Summer Music Camp now in its 12th year. Gretchen founded Thanks to Dr. Suzuki Concert Performances, a charitable organization whose mission is to create community among students and teachers of Toronto area Suzuki schools in a yearly collaborative gala concert. She approaches the Suzuki philosophy from 2 sides of the Suzuki triangle, as a teacher, and also as a parent of two children who learned violin by the Suzuki method studying at the MNjcc Suzuki Program.

Justin Bell - Drumming



Justin began playing drums at four years old, initially self-teaching by listening to and watching his favourite rock and jazz players. In middle school he began formalizing his playing experience by joining the school concert band and marching bands, and continued to branch out into many other forms of percussion into high school. He began performing with the Hochstein Youth Symphony Orchestra in Rochester, New York, becoming principal percussionist in his Grade 12 year. In university, he earned a minor in percussion performance studying under Greg Runions and performing in the Queen's University Percussion Ensemble. He returned to Queen's in 2013 to earn a Bachelor of Education at the primary/junior level. While maintaining a love for all things percussion, his core passion remains the drum kit, and Justin has spent the last ten years playing in various rock and jazz groups, as well as doing occasional session work and teaching private lessons. Most recently, he held a residency as the band leader, drummer, and vocalist for Hide the Rum, the house band at a popular restaurant in Bermuda. Without forgetting his formal training and the importance of structured teaching and learning, his core philosophy remains "just play drums."

Rebecca Bell - Yoga for musicians



Rebecca Bell is an established, Toronto based, movement and fitness coach and teacher, whose repertoire includes teaching yoga and meditation to children. Her extensive background began in dance and has evolved through many areas of fitness and physical practices, including yoga, pilates, t'ai chi, stretch, strength training, spinning, and more recently, Electric muscle stimulation fitness training, Functional movement training, and Barre Intensity training. Rebecca divides her time between teaching classes and working one on one with clients. Her two daughters grew up in the JCC Suzuki program, and she has taught for us in previous camps. The yoga class for our young musicians is a welcome addition to their busy day, giving them a chance to explore new movements focus on connecting their breath to their actions. They always enjoy the end of the week yoga presentation.

Bethany Bergman – violin



New to our Suzuki program last season, Bethany Bergman will again be teaching violin group classes and note reading ensembles, as well as teaching private violin lessons. She holds a master's degree focused in Music Performance from University of Toronto, and currently has positions both with Hamilton Philharmonic, and the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra.

Bethany is known not only as skilled as an orchestral musician, but as well for her knowledge in baroque styles, contemporary music, and alternative styles of music. She has an international reputation with experience recording for film and numerous artists. We were fortunate last season that Bethany was able to substitute occasionally for various teachers and are thrilled to have her on board this season as part of our regular staff, sharing her expertise with our community.

Jennifer Burford – violin, improvisation



Jennifer's students range in age from children as young as 3 years old to adults. She is a member of the violin faculty at the Miles Nadal JCC Suzuki Program and the Royal Conservatory School. Her teaching style readily adapts to the needs of the individual student. She has experienced all sides of the Suzuki Triangle, beginning as a Suzuki student at age 4, continuing to evolve as a Suzuki teacher, and adapting into a new role as a Suzuki parent and practice partner to her oldest of three children. She began her first decade of teaching at the North York Suzuki School where she held the positions of String Coordinator and Director. Jennifer is equally comfortable with older children and teens, having held teaching positions at Claude Watson School for the Arts and Havergal College.

Prior to beginning her teaching career in 2006, she completed a Bachelor's of Music Performance while studying with Mark Skazinetsky at the University of Toronto. She received her Artist Diploma from the Glenn Gould School and her Master's of Music Performance Degree from University of Toronto under the tutelage of Erika Raum. Jennifer has completed teacher training through the Suzuki Association of America in books 1-8, studying with Elayne Ras, Ed Sprunger, Karen Kimmet, Kathleen Spring, and Allen Lieb. She also has taken the Suzuki Association of the Americas supplemental course "Teaching from the Balance Point" with Ed Kreitman. Jennifer recently was

certified as a Teacher Trainer in the Creative Ability Development, a method of developing divergent thinking and musical artistry through improvisation.

Jennifer remains an active performer and freelancer in Toronto. She holds the position of Principal Second Violin with the chamber orchestra Canadian Sinfonietta and has performed with Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Esprit Orchestra, Toronto Concert Orchestra, Sinfonia Toronto, and Mirvish Productions. She continues to enjoy playing chamber music, after being a recipient of the Felix Galimir Chamber Music award at UofT. In addition to classical music, Jennifer has developed her versatility as a musician by recording and performing with jazz, funk, folk, Klezmer artists, and the Queer Songbook Orchestra.

She is a member of the Suzuki Association of America, the Suzuki Association of Ontario, and the American Federation of Musicians.

Maya Chilton – violin, theory/singing



Maya has been a faculty member at the JCC since 2006. After a brief leave of absence in 2011 she returned to the faculty in 2013 as a group and private teacher. In addition to violin Maya has also taught voice at the JCC summer camp.

As a graduate of Toronto's Humber College Maya majored in Voice & Violin, Composition and Performance. After completing her B.A. at Humber, she studied under Paule Barsalou for her Suzuki Teacher training.

Outside of teaching Maya is an active member of the Toronto performance community. She performs and tours as a singer, DJ and violinist for Down with Webster, Divine Brown & Alyssa Reid, to name a few. She is also the most recent solo artist to be signed to Maple Music Recordings.

Philip Clark – piano accompaniment



Philip studied piano and harpsichord at Oberlin College, while majoring in philosophy. In his teens and twenties, he played jazz piano with various ensembles. Since 2002 he has taught philosophy at U of T. Both Phil's children studied at the MNjcc Program, son Sam on violin, and daughter Gwendolyn on cello. He became an accompanist for the Suzuki Program in 2014.

Debra Cutler – violin



Debra Cutler has enjoyed teaching for the MNJCC Suzuki program over the past 11 years. Though she has devoted much of her time recently toward raising her three young children (two of whom study the violin through the program), Debra continues to love teaching and sharing a love of music with her students.

Debra received her Bachelor's degree in Violin Performance from Indiana University and a Master of Arts in Music Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She studied Suzuki pedagogy at Indiana University, and received her Suzuki Books 1-8 Certification through the School for Strings in New York City. She has also taught various early childhood music classes and

received her New York State Teaching Certification in Music for grades K-12. Debra has appeared as a solo and orchestral performer in Cleveland, Ohio, Interlochen, Michigan, Bloomington, Indiana, Jerusalem, New York City and Toronto.

Diana Dawydchak – violin, fiddling



Since the tender age of 4, Diana has demonstrated her love and passion for performing and love for all genres of music. Classically trained and a Book 10 graduate of the Violin Suzuki Method, she is currently continuing to develop her pedagogical skills and has completed her Suzuki Unit One Teacher Development Course. Diana is currently in the third year of her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto studying Violin Performance under

the tutelage of Dr. Timothy Ying.

At a young age she was exposed to Canadian Old Time Fiddle Music and became hooked. Over the years, she has competed in many competitions in Ontario and the Maritimes and has been a Champion in each of her age categories multiple times as well as Duet and Gospel throughout 2007-current. She is a two time Canadian Open Fiddle Champion, Ontario Open Champion, Southwestern Open Champion and Northern Ontario Open Champion. Diana also demonstrates a love for the American Bluegrass Styles and was the Junior Runner up in the Grand Master Fiddle Championship in Nashville Tennessee, and the Tennessee State Fiddle Championship.

Diana is a multi-instrumentalist and performs with her Family Band (DnA-Diana and Andrew) where you can find her stepdancing, playing the keyboard and French button accordion. Together with her brother, they recorded their first album in Nashville 2016 and were showcased on Toronto's CP24 Breakfast Television. She performs at many musical events in Ontario such as celidhs/dances, festivals, showcases and private events. She is a frequently invited guest of Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy and has shared the stage with them at numerous shows and festivals.

This past summer, Diana was accepted into the National Youth Orchestra of Canada's summer program and took part in their first virtual orchestral institute. Last summer, Diana had the opportunity of assisting Jonathan Crow as his faculty assistant at the Interprovincial Music Camp.

The Suzuki Program was very excited to welcome Diana onto our teaching team for 2019-20 as an improv teacher. This 2020-21 season she will be teaching fiddle technique and tunes to both children and adults.

Katrina Grieve - violin (on leave from teaching group classes for 2020-2021)



Katrina grew up as a Suzuki violin student and has taught Suzuki violin for almost 20 years. Since 2000, she has taught with the Suzuki program at the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Center. She also taught violin and piano for several years with the Oakville Suzuki Association. Katrina studied the violin at Oberlin College in Ohio and performs with the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra. She has taken Suzuki teacher training for both Suzuki violin and piano. Katrina also enjoys the experience of being a Suzuki parent to her two sons, who learn violin at the MNjcc Suzuki Program

David Lokan – note-reading ensembles, theory



David Lokan, son of longtime Suzuki Program teacher Nancy Lokan, began his violin studies at age six, as a student in the MNjcc Suzuki Program. He continued advancing in the program, playing both violin and viola until leaving for university, completing his Bachelor of Music at Western University, studying violin, with a major in composition.

He has performed in university orchestras, opera productions, and performed in solo recitals from a young age. He completed his teacher's college degree at York University (primary school

division) and has completed a variety of teaching experiences in private and group settings. David is excited to continue working with the MNjcc Suzuki Program and give back to the community that he came from. The program is equally thrilled to have him back as one of our newer staff members, completing the continuous circle of learning by the Suzuki method.

C.T. Lo - Theory/Singing



C.T. Lo currently teaches at the Richmond Hill Suzuki School, (Store Front : Pearl Piano), offering Music Theory, Musicianship, and Private Piano lessons, both online and in the school. She has taught at the MNjcc Suzuki Program and Summer Music & Arts Camp since its beginnings 12 summer ago. CT also taught piano and musicianship classes at the North York Suzuki School of Music, and the Beaches Suzuki school for many years. She has taught at The Discovery Private School for Children with Non-visible Disabilities, and worked as a recording engineer at The Hive Studios prior to joining the Suzuki Schools, and is certified by the

RCM for teaching Kodaly, Orff-Schulwerk, Jazz Orff and Early Childhood Music Education. She is certified from More than Music of Kingston Ont. as a Suzuki Piano teacher. C.T. was in the Jazz Piano program of Humber College and studied with the late Brian Harris.

Nancy Lokan – violin, viola, chamber music



Nancy Lokan started her violin studies in Ottawa, where as a teenager, she started freelancing professionally both in chamber music, and with various orchestras. She has a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Toronto where she studied violin with Lorand Fenyves and Leo Wigdorich. Following this, Nancy became a member of the Canadian Forces String Ensemble for seven years. She has freelanced and taught Suzuki violin in Toronto for many years. She teaches chamber music classes, and Suzuki repertoire class at the MNjcc Suzuki Program, as well as teaching privately. Nancy studied Suzuki Teacher Training at Steven's Point in Wisconsin, USA, and with Karen Kimmett, and Paule Barselou in Ontario. All three of her children have studied violin by the Suzuki method at MNjcc Program, and now this fall, her grandson will start

in the program. Observing the philosophy at work, as a Suzuki parent, grandparent, and Suzuki teacher has added an extra dimension to Nancy's life. Some years ago, she and her two sons became quite involved with helping the National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica, a social development program aimed at enhancing the lives of children from challenged communities through the discipline of learning classical music.

Kerri McGonigle – cello, chamber music



A recipient of the Margarita Heron Pine String Prize and the Beryl Barns Graduate Scholarship, cellist Kerri McGonigle graduated with a Master of Music degree in cello performance from the University of Alberta. While studying in Paris, she won Premier Prix with unanimous distinction in violoncello and chamber music from the Gennevilliers Conservatory. Having completed an Advanced Certificate in Baroque Performance with Tafelmusik through the University of

Toronto, Kerri is based in Toronto and performs regularly as a recitalist, chamber musician and orchestral cellist on both Baroque and modern cello, recently playing with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Alberta Baroque Ensemble, Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Talisker Ensemble, Aradia Orchestra, Nota Bene Orchestra and the Bach Consort. In addition to Suzuki training, Kerri studied cello pedagogy as part of her master's degree with Tanya Prochazka and with Irene Sharp in San Francisco. She has been teaching cello and chamber music at the Miles Nadal JCC Suzuki Program since 2007.

Alex McMaster – chamber music



Since her graduation from the University of Toronto with an Honours B.A. in Music, cellist Alex McMaster has been very active as a performer in the Canadian music scene, playing many styles of music with a variety of ensembles. She is as comfortable improvising or learning by ear as she is reading music, and has performed at venues across North America including the ACC, Roy Thompson Hall and Massey Hall.

She has been teaching private cello lessons at University of Toronto Schools (UTS) since 2010, and has been hired as a cello clinician at Sir John A. Macdonald C.I., Rosedale School for the Arts

and UTS. Alex has worked as a chamber music coach with the Miles Nadal JCC Suzuki program since 2017.

Emma Mogyorodi – musicianship (on leave for 2020-21)



Having started her musical studies far away in Australia, Emma enrolled in the MNjcc Suzuki Program as a young, gifted violinist. She attributes her adult musical successes to her early Suzuki studies. Emma claims to have been a “reluctant” violinist, who was patiently nurtured by her parents and by her various teachers. Equally gifted with vocal skills, Emma changed her focus to voice in her university years and pursued a vocal performance career at the Glenn Gould School. However, always with a keen fondness for children, from this point she focussed on a degree @ George Brown University in Early Childhood Education and has pursued much research in this field along the way, bringing her to the present where she is currently completing her master’s degree in Early Childhood Education @ Ryerson University. As part of her research she was invited to complete a 2-year summer internship as “early years music coordinator” @ the Royal Conservatory of Music where she studied Off and Kodály methods. Emma has been on staff with our program since 2017.

Erika Neilsen – cello, chamber music



A passionate, wholehearted performer known for her "vibrant cello playing" (The WholeNote), cellist Erika Nielsen has a multi-faceted career as a chamber musician, collaborative artist, orchestral player, and educator, with a musicianship that spans from Baroque and Classical traditions to contemporary and popular genres.

A passionate educator with a love for teaching cellists of all ages, levels, and abilities, Erika has been on faculty at National Music Camp of Canada since 2018 and the Miles Nadal JCC Suzuki Program in downtown Toronto since 2016, where she coaches chamber music and group classes. She maintains a busy private studio, and is an itinerant cello teacher for Branksome Hall and Havergal College, and is certified through The Royal Conservatory and the Suzuki Association of the Americas, where she completed her teacher training with Susan Gagnon.

As a chamber musician, Erika regularly performs as a solo and continuo player with Rezonance Baroque Ensemble. She was principal cello of the Sudbury Symphony Orchestra from 2011–13, and continues to lead cello sections with numerous orchestras across Ontario. Erika also performs with Classic Albums Live, the 25-piece Toronto Motown band The Big Sound, and the Electric Light Orchestra tribute band Strange Magic.

Born to a musical family in Lahr, Germany, and raised in Kingston, ON, Erika completed her Bachelor of Music at Queen's University with Wolf Tormann and her Artist Diploma at the Glenn Gould School with David Hetherington. She is an alumna of numerous summer festivals such as The Banff Centre, le Domaine Forget, Toronto Summer Music, Schloss Beuggen International Music Festival in Germany, the Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute, and the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance for Baroque specialization.

Erika is also an author and writer, and has been a visual artist her entire life.
www.celloerika.com @celloerika

Lisa Olafson – ukulele



Lisa Olafson worked as an actor for many years, including touring internationally with the renowned mask and mime theatre company, Theatre Beyond Words. She wrote and toured her one woman clown show before starting the female rootsy bluegrass trio, Dirty Dishes. She loves teaching suzuki music to babies and toddlers, leading Kindie and Primary Choirs for young singers and is thrilled, of course, to share her love of music by teaching the happiest instrument of all, the Ukulele!

Amanda Penner – violin, viola



Originally from Manitoba, Amanda Penner completed a Bachelor of Music in violin performance at the University of Manitoba before moving to Toronto where she obtained a master's degree in viola performance at the University of Toronto.

As a performer, she has a wide range of interests and experiences. As a classical orchestral player

and chamber musician, she has played most recently for Orchestra London, Sudbury Symphony Orchestra, Canadian Sinfonietta, and Feu Noire String Quartet. Her playing abilities also include improvising, arranging string parts and recording as a session player for various singer-songwriters, electronic musicians and bands, as well as Multibeat Music and Ivory Storm Productions. During this time she has also developed as a teacher, continuing her training in the Suzuki method, gaining experience while teaching at the Huntsville Suzuki School, private and group lessons, chamber music, outreach music programs in the schools and theory. Amanda joined the MNjcc Suzuki Program team last season after moving back to Toronto and freelances in the city as well.

Alison Porter – Suzuki Early Childhood Music classes (on leave for 2020-21)



New to our Suzuki program teaching team, Alison is the proud mama of a budding 4-year old violinist who studies at the MNjcc Suzuki Program. A Suzuki music teacher, and professional performer, she founded and directs her own music school in east Toronto called LoveNotes School of Music. Alison has a passion for sharing music with young children, gentle parenting strategies and baking good pies. She has been working as a music instructor for over 10 years and living it her whole life. Growing up, she studied classical violin, playing in orchestras and quartets and took home many a festival ribbon. After getting her start in the classical world, Alison went on to play violin in numerous indie-rock, alt-country and folk bands and currently sings and plays in the sassy all-girl country/bluegrass trio called “Dirty Dishes.”

Tova Rosenberg – cello



Incorporating her extensive Suzuki training with her love of working with young children, Tova Rosenberg has developed innovative teaching ideas for young cellists and exciting programs for early childhood music education in New York City, and now in Toronto. For almost a decade, Tova was the teacher of the Early Childhood Music Program at the School for Strings in Manhattan, where she also taught Suzuki cello lessons and theory classes. She was a member of the cello faculty at the Diller-Quaile School of Music as well as the Third Street Music School Settlement. She has been a cello teacher for the Music Institute of Long Island, the Suzuki program at Brooklyn College and for the summer string festival at the Elisabeth Morrow School in New Jersey. An active performer, Tova was a founding

member of the TEA trio. She holds an M.M. from DePaul University and a B.M. from McGill University and is a graduate of the School for Strings 2-year intensive Suzuki Teacher Training Program in NYC. She is also

certified in the Mark O'Connor Violin Method. Tova is on the cello faculty at the Miles Nadal JCC Suzuki Strings Program as well as the Royal Conservatory of Music. She has been the sole creator and teacher of custom Early Childhood Music Curriculums around Toronto, previously running classes out of the Wychwood Barns' *Music in the Barns* studio and the Miles Nadal JCC. Currently, Tova runs her one of a kind, music education program, Do Re...Me! out of the Trinity St. Paul's Centre in the Annex.

Kate Shaner – violin, viola, Suzuki Early Childhood Music classes and MNjcc Suzuki Program Administrative Assistant



Kate is a dedicated and passionate Suzuki teacher, music educator and arts administrator. She's looking forward to joining the admin team at the Miles Nadal JCC Suzuki Program as the Administrative Assistant beginning fall 2020. In addition to her admin duties, she teaches group classes, private lessons and the Suzuki Early Childhood Music class at the MNjcc.

Prior to moving to Toronto, Kate was the assistant director of Greenwich Suzuki Academy and head of development for the Friends of Greenwich Suzuki Academy fund. She was also a primary member of the violin, viola, and SECE faculty. Prior to joining GSA in 2017, she served as the director of the Milford Branch at The Music School of Delaware and a core violin and viola faculty member in the school's Suzuki Academy from 2013-2017. In 2016, Kate was selected as one of Delaware's top young professionals and received the Delaware Business Times "Best 40 under 40" award. From 2008 to 2013, she taught viola and chamber music at Interlochen Arts Summer Camp. She also served on the board of directors for the Greater Philadelphia Suzuki Association from 2016-2017.

Kate is a registered Suzuki teacher with the Suzuki Association of the Americas in ECC, SPA, SECE Unit 1, violin units 1-6, violin practicum, and viola unit 5. She is a graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy and holds degrees from the University of Memphis (B.M.) and Ithaca College (M.M., Suzuki Pedagogy). While at Ithaca College, she completed the long term Suzuki training program under Sanford Reuning and Carrie Reuning-Hummel, with additional instruction from Edward Kreitman, Stephanie Sandven, Teri Einfeldt and April Losey. Kate has studied Suzuki Early Childhood Education with trainer Lynn McCall. Her principal viola teachers have included Debra Moree, Lenny Schranze, David Holland and

Shelley Beard Santore. Kate's students have been accepted into prestigious training programs including Interlochen Arts Academy and Sphinx Performance Academy.

In her spare time, Kate enjoys reading, playing chamber music with friends and gardening. She lives in Toronto, Ontario with her husband Rabbi Jordan Shaner and their two rescue dogs.

Arie Verheul van de Ven - Composition



Formerly a violin and viola student in the MNjcc Suzuki Program, Arie Verheul van de Ven is a composer and violist based in Toronto. Writing & playing for a variety of contexts, Arie's music is informed by deep interests both in contemporary classical music as well as Canadian folk music, klezmer, and free improvisation.

Arie is currently working in a variety of distanced music projects, finding ways to present music within new digital contexts, embracing the problems that online music making presents. He is currently a resident composer with the Gather Round Singers and Jumblies Theatre, and has been collaborating with them in creating choral music specifically written to be performed online. Arie received a bachelor of arts in composition at Wilfrid Laurier University studying contemporary music with Linda Catlin Smith, Cameron McKittrick, and Christine Vlajk. He is currently working towards a masters in composition with Peter Adriaansz and Yannis Kyriakides at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague.

For the past 6 years, the summer Music & Arts Camp has featured Arie teaching klezmer, and more recently, as our composition teacher. Due to the awarding of a grant from the JCCA called "Making Music Happen," in 2018-19 Arie was asked to create a curriculum and teach an innovative youth klezmer music course entitled "Klez-mish." The goal of this course was to captivate a younger generation, to teach and spread the knowledge and richness of klezmer music, and related genres. We are pleased to announce that 2020-21 marks Arie's first season teaching in the Tuesday Suzuki Program.