

Suzuki Talent Education Association of Australia (NSW) Ltd.

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

13 October 2024 10.30am

Suzuki Music Institute, Thornleigh and online via Zoom

Present: Takao Mizushima (Braxton Neate's proxy), Jin Takamura, Lynn McLeod, Tina Li, Genevieve Joshi, Alice Luo, Jodie Li, Kirk Boladeras, Sheau Fang Low, Zohara Rotem, Alina Gollner, Pak-Luan Yeoh, Carolyn Zhu, Nicole Cox, Sabine Madden, Haruo Goto, Laura McDonald, Lisa Grossman, Gabrielle Donovan, Yulia Lai, Erica Booker, Sophie Chalk, Valerie Gutenev, Danielle Dotson, Masaki Nakamura, Pam Clifford, Airen Nakamura.

Apologies: Braxton Neate, Junko Nishimura

Observer: Tina O'Hagan (Executive Officer)

Started at 10.50am (waited for quorum)

1. Acknowledgement of Country

Takao acknowledged country.

I open this meeting by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land, the Dharug and GuriNgai peoples, and paying respect to their ancestors and elders, past and present, and their heritage. I also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands from which you join online today, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participating in this meeting.

2. Chairperson's welcome

Welcome to the 2024 Annual General Meeting of Suzuki Talent Education Association of Australia, NSW.

3. Apologies

Braxton Neate. Proxy was given from Braxton Neate to Takao.

4. Presentation and acceptance of Minutes of previous AGM meeting, 8th October 2023

You all received last year AGM Minutes. All present accepted. Motion passed.

5. President's report

You received it online but I'll read it here (insert copy).

6. Overview and Adoption of Directors & Auditor Signed Audited Financial Report 2024 – Carolyn Zhu (Treasurer)

It is my honour to present the Treasurer's report for the financial year ending 2024. I will highlight our financial performance over the past year. Our total revenue was \$599K compared to \$560K in the 2023 financial year. This increase in income is a positive sign that we continue to grow and attract financial support. As the income increases so does our expenditure. Our expenditure \$627K. As a result our profit loss for 2024 we had a loss of \$27,800 which is higher than the loss we experienced in 2023. The increase is the increase in cost of running our association, employment cost. While it is concerning to see expenses grow it is essential to recognise that this cost supported the events that are central to our association's mission. Despite the challenges, our association remains in a strong financial position. Our balance sheet shows \$1.8M, this ensures we have a solid foundation going forward. Our goal to maintain this strong financial position while finding ways .

It has been a great honour to serve as treasure and I'm proud of the progress we've made.

7. Special Business (none)

8. Resignation of the following Board Office Bearers & Directors:

- (a) Vice President (ordinary) – Jin Takamura
- (b) Treasurer (ordinary) – Carolyn Zhu
- (e) Board Member (ordinary) – Valerie Gutenev Hale
- (d) Board Member (teacher) – Jodie Li

9. Election of new members to the Board of Management:

- (b) Election of Vice President (ordinary) – **Valerie Gutenev Hale**
- (c) Election of Treasurer – **Pak-Luan**
- (e) Election of Board Member (ordinary) – **Alice Luo**
- (f) Election of Board Member (ordinary) – **Sheena Kakar**
- (f) Election of Board Member (teacher) – **Jodie Li**

Takao moved, all accepted.

8. General Business:

Takao: Our member numbers are going down. As a Board we are thinking about it. We need all member support and we need to encourage all our members to be involved in our activities more. Any comments?

Erica – we have been discussing this as piano teachers. We feel optimistic that numbers will pick up and they are starting to. We are working to have teachers meet physically. We are hopeful that the more we as teachers we can meet together for events as well as socially it will grow the band of piano teachers and then students. At the moment we have a lot of students who can not get teachers. We are training as many piano teachers as we can.

Takao – in Japanese association there is a huge drop in membership. They are having financial problems now. They are thinking to increase teacher numbers but still nothing makes it better. Their association is almost financially collapsed in 2 years time. I was given this info from some Japanese teachers. In Australia our population is going up since I came to Australia in 1988 – 16.5 million, 26 million now.

Suzuki Association works because we work as a group. These days there are lots of other music associations. People are trying to find which is better. Of course nobody knows what Suzuki method is. They only categorise us as a music association. Only inside Suzuki Association members know that not only music is the aim of Suzuki. Developing a good personality was Dr Suzuki's idea.

Zohara – look for the place to improve not from the outside but from the inside. It is not competition with other systems, methods and other organisations. All that we can do is go inside and see how we can improve ourselves. I think like many things change comes from within. One of the things we can do more is work on the Suzuki vision, how we can dedicate ourselves to the service of the Suzuki way. Even though all associations in the world are going through hard times. We need to put attention on the vision.

Takao – quorum is 25 but our member is 1229. We need to wait for 25. Parent members are busy with kids on a Sunday. Teacher member is 150. For Suzuki events it is hard to get teacher numbers. Not many teachers want to apply for tuition at our events.

Sheung Feng message – Takao, you might like to know that membership for other music associations have also dropped. Many young teachers would “sit on the fence” before deciding what they do.” Parents are also stretched.

Erica message – I agree that ongoing education for ‘older’ teachers has declined – we need a lot of ongoing PD.

Alina Gollner – I would like to second Zohara's suggestion about focusing on a vision for our work, our association, our community, a vision that includes the relationships that we want to foster within and without.

Erica - Yes, personal relationships and the depth of increasing vision would be an aspiration and inspiration for teachers' own development.

9. Keynote speaker – Haruo Goto (Vice President, Teacher Trainer)

“My Thoughts and Journey with the Suzuki Method”.

This is not easy for me. I find it easy to work with students in a studio or workshops. Increasingly I see it is important for me to express in studio and in workshop situation. I'd like to share my thoughts about the Suzuki method. Hopefully my idea is not my subjective idea but I hope it is more objective view of Suzuki method and Suzuki movement. When I learned about my childhood about Suzuki, I had a feeling that I had a destiny to become a Suzuki student. Way before I was born my father came across a violin at his university. One of his university friends was a violin player and Suzuki student who worked to be a Suzuki teacher. This friend gave my father a how to play lessons. He picked up playing violin at university. At the same time, another friend of his was deeply into classical music whereas my father had never listened or knew much about classical music. This friend invited my father to his house and brought out a previous vinyl record and made him sit properly on the floor in front of the record. He said I'm going to play the Mendelssohn violin concerto and you are not to move while I play the whole concerto. He told me later that it was nothing but pain. I don't know which came first listening or lessons. But that is how he came closer to violin and music. This friend kept telling him about Suzuki method. He learned a bit about Suzuki philosophy then. He thought it is not a bad thing to do once he got married and had a child – this was a long time before either of those 2 things happened. The seeds were planted.

My mother's dad who I never met, used to work for the father of Shinichi Suzuki. I couldn't believe that! She said that her dad used to say “my boss, Mr Suzuki, is the best boss I could ever hope for. He is the best man. I would do anything for him.” My mum's dad totally respected and trusted Dr Suzuki's father.

My mum knew about Dr Suzuki's father and he was an amazing, responsible, caring, loving gentleman. It is amazing that my mum and dad got together.

Apparently my parents with a 7 month old me, went to look at the Matsumoto summer school. At that school during the group lessons by Dr Suzuki. He came to the audience floor and picked me up and gave me a hug. I wish I remembered that. That was my first encounter with Dr Suzuki. Then, when I turned 3 my parents decided that they'll start Suzuki method with me. There was a Suzuki violin studio nearby and my parents took me to a studio to observe with me. There was a sign on the door – unfortunately there is no class today. My dad told his Suzuki friend about this and the friend told him to take me to another teacher. If you really want to do the Suzuki method you need to go to the best and he is the best in that region. My parents started Suzuki method with Mr Yamura. Later on I learned that Mr Yamura was the son of a big farmer in the area. Nobody knew how this son of farmer got in touch with a violin. He was infamous around the village with his wildness and naughtiness. But I heard that once he got hooked on

the violin he couldn't stop practicing,. Sometimes at night not to be too noisy he practiced in a cupboard. Somewhere he heard Mr Suzuki perform. My teacher decided that this Dr Suzuki would become his teacher.

Dr Suzuki used to teach at the imperial conservatorium of music. So my teacher went to learn from him. My teacher became a professional violin player and he played in a quartet and orchestra. Because of his musical performance, they were well treated by the then Japanese government. He would receive white rice, sugar, miso, vegetables, fruit, which none of the ordinary Japanese people could dream of getting during the war time as they were so poor.

My mum said that at that time her and her siblings used to go into bush or forest looking for roots or stems of plants for something to eat every day.

After the war when Dr Suzuki decided that he is not going to go to university but start this movement of talent education trying to teach young children and try to prove that anybody can learn. Then Dr Suzuki got in touch with my teacher about this new movement and invited him to join. My teacher agreed but was in big trouble from his wife. To join Dr Suzuki he needed to quit his performance career. His wife was not happy as what could they do without this food. The wife said "you don't know how to teach", he said "true but I'll learn." They were like comrades, like they were going to change the society and proving that any child can learn not just music, depending on their environment and it is our duty to provide a better environment for children.

I started learning. I don't remember my early days. I remember clearly that I didn't like practicing much. I tried every trick to get out of practice sessions. The worst thing I remember that when I was practicing with my mum, my dad starts telling us what to do as he thought he could play the violin. What dad was saying was totally different to what my teacher was telling me to do. I told dad "you're wrong, I won't do it as that is not what my teacher says."

Because of that, lessons didn't go well from my teacher's point of view as there wasn't much progress and my mum was in trouble with the teacher asking her what she was doing at home. My mum couldn't do anything as my dad was saying what I should do. One week my mum asked my dad to take us for lessons. So he went to the lesson. I don't know what conversation there was but during the lesson my teacher said to my dad, "so it is you disturbing your kids, it is you who is stopping your kids progressing, you're the cancer". Don't underestimate your children's ability. If you don't understand, don't say anything to your kids. That was the last time my dad came to a lesson. He wouldn't come near my teacher. Although I didn't like practicing much, I loved coming to lessons and playing in groups and playing the violin. I had to practice because I didn't want to get into trouble from my teacher, whose nickname was atomic bomb which is a good nickname for a teacher after the war.

My teacher said to me, lessons for him is like the real swordfight, it is 1:1, either I win or you win, I'm putting my life on this. So when you play put your life on it. And that was every week. I knew he meant it, his life was on the line to give his students a lesson. His commitment wasn't just teaching me, he was putting the whole being of him, his life, on me. That is not just violin teaching, that is a totally different level. I'm just realising now that what kind of commitment it takes for a teacher to put his life on every student, but I feel that is what I need to do, put everything that I have out because it is more than just a word. I don't regard what I do is teaching kids, because every week I need to learn my students, each week is different. To learn about my students, I need to be totally open. I cannot possibly assume, this student was doing this last week so they will do this this week. I am learning to be open, learning not to have any prejudice – which is ongoing lifetime learning, but I think Suzuki teaching or in Suzuki method, music and in my case violin, music violin and tone is not the aim, music is not the aim, teaching violin is not the aim, it is a vehicle to realise children's unlimited potential. It is not only the musical potential. In a way in order to play music really well, you really need to tap into, as a teacher and a violin player, my body and my mind and how my body is designed, what kind of movement I need to do in order to be efficient, to move from the strength of my core and I need to learn the existence of my mind and obviously part of my mind has feeling and emotion, that is the moving part of my mind and I have a mind that controls my body. I need to have my mind focused and calm, which is really tapping into the whole being because you are tapping into a student's body and mind which starts right from pre-twinkle.

In order to move your body well you need to have a better mindset. Together with music. I think we are here to tap into children's intelligence, but their core ability of body and mind and hopefully it leads to doing something with their spirit. When you feel the existence of spirit and if you can feel like Bach and Mozart, any of those great composers' spirit in their music, if you can feel great players such as Kreisler – we can feel the greatest artists from the past to the present. You can learn so much about human being from Bach, Mozart, Beethoven. You can learn about love and humanity from Kreisler. I'm sure their aim was to connect to other people and they believed for people's freedom and fought for that freedom, the vehicle to pass that message on was music. I think Suzuki's aim is for all of us to grow and be a better human being and it is not only music ability or being better at mathematics. The highest ability we can acquire is the ability to be able to change who you are. If you can change your thought or how you think about things and how you look at things, that will certainly change your action. If you can change how you think and how you act, you are a different person. I am talking about changing, I am not talking about pretending. You cannot pretend in front of children, they sense. I feel, we adults, need to change for the better, in order to be able to give a better environment to children. That is the Suzuki method.

When talking about the so called mother tongue method, there is love before words. It is that expression of parents love, appreciation and care to their babies, is the beginning of the mother tongue method. It is not about putting children in the environment of speaking in a particular language. If that were so, we could put children in front of someone talking at them. It is because of love we connect. Words are just there to verbally connect, but the connection doesn't have to be with words, it could be with facial expression, touching. But nothing begins without love. If I think about this, in order to realise the Suzuki method with my students and their families, I often question whether I can give that sort of love to all of my students and their families. It is a big ask but I think that is what it takes and I need to keep learning to love, to accept people's love. It cannot be possibly one way out, it has to go round. When we all feel love, care goes around, we make a better society. That is what I feel I got from Dr Suzuki and Mr Yamura and I would hope that I can pass on that.

Parent's love for kids is universal, it is timeless. That is why I think the Suzuki method has spread around the world. It is to do with our love for children, our love in society, that is universal and it is timeless, and I hope that we can keep moving on.

Thank you

10. Date of next AGM meeting in 2025 to be advised.

11. Close of meeting