



SUZUKI TALENT EDUCATION

PROGRAM HANDBOOK FOR FAMILIES

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MACPHAIL SUZUKI TALENT EDUCATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Suzuki Talent Education at MacPhail Center for Music	1
<u>Individual Instruction</u>	1
<u>Reminders for New Suzuki Parents</u>	1
<u>Observations</u>	2
<u>Group Classes</u>	2
<u>Reading Classes</u>	2
<u>String Orchestras for String Students</u>	2
<u>Parent-Teacher Conferences</u>	3
<u>Studio Recitals</u>	3
<u>Department Recitals</u>	3
<u>Recital Attendance Etiquette</u>	3
<u>Rehearsals and Recitals with an Accompanist</u>	4
<u>MacPhail Opportunities</u>	4
<u>Suzuki Tour Program</u>	4
<u>Buddy Program</u>	4
<u>Lesson Policies</u>	5
<u>Lesson Makeup Policy</u>	5
<u>Emergency School Closings</u>	5
<u>Summer Lesson Policy</u>	5
<u>Policy for Changing Teachers within the MacPhail Suzuki Program</u>	5
The MacPhail Suzuki Booster Club	6
<u>The Suzuki Faculty Professional Development Fund</u>	6
Selection and Care of Your Instrument	7
<u>Violin, Viola, Cello, and String Bass</u>	7
<u>Harp</u>	8
<u>Guitar</u>	9
<u>Piano</u>	10
Shops for Instruments and Music Supplies	11
<u>Instrument Sales and Repairs</u>	11
<u>Local Music Stores for Recordings and Sheet Music</u>	12
<u>Other Resources</u>	12
Orchestra Policies	13
<u>Orchestra Expectations</u>	13
<u>Orchestra Attendance Policy</u>	14
<u>Orchestra Dress Code</u>	15

Suzuki Talent Education at MacPhail Center for Music Building Community for Music Learning

Welcome to Suzuki at MacPhail! Our supportive learning environment is the perfect place for parents and children to develop a creative, cooperative learning partnership. As one of the country's oldest Suzuki programs, we offer the most highly qualified and trained Suzuki instructors to support and train growing talent and give older Suzuki students unique orchestral and chamber music opportunities. There are several components to Suzuki study at MacPhail, and each one enhances an important aspect of your child's musical growth. Regular attendance and full participation in each of the instructional areas are key to a rewarding and successful Suzuki experience. The following is a summary of your activities:

- ❖ Weekly individual instruction
- ❖ Group classes
- ❖ Note-Reading classes for string and piano students
- ❖ Orchestras for string students
- ❖ Parent-Teacher conferences
- ❖ Studio and department recitals (accompanists provided)
- ❖ Special performance opportunities and events
- ❖ Suzuki Booster Club membership and volunteer opportunity for parents
- ❖ Out and About community performances
- ❖ International and Domestic Tour Group (for ages 13-18)
- ❖ Buddy Program

Individual Instruction

The individual lesson is the core of Suzuki instruction – where basic skills are taught and the parent-teacher-child learning team is developed. You and your instructor will arrange a mutually convenient time for weekly instruction. Teachers will devote the first lessons to parent instruction on the instrument. Your child will begin attending lessons when invited by the teacher. The amount of instruction a student receives is tailored to each child's rate of growth in the manner of the Suzuki philosophy.

The parent observes the teacher's comments and instruction and uses these guidelines in practice at home. Note taking is essential. While the parent is the "teacher at home," the teacher is the person who leads the studio lessons. Occasionally, other Suzuki students and parents will observe your lesson. You, too, are encouraged and welcomed to observe other students' lessons.

Reminders for New Suzuki Parents

New families placed with a teacher are required to attend the New Parent Classes, which are offered on Saturday mornings each semester. This class replaces the group class for the first semester of instruction. Parents will hear lectures, participate in group discussions, observe lessons, and view videos to help prepare for the best Suzuki experience.

Observations

In addition to this private instruction, parents are encouraged to observe private lessons and group lessons together with their child. Online observations or observing pre-recorded lessons are encouraged. Observations help the parent understand how the Suzuki Method works and builds the new student's interest and comfort with his or her upcoming lessons.

Group Classes

Each Suzuki student is assigned to a group class. The group class is an integral part of the Suzuki experience. Musical topics are explored and note reading and rhythm are also emphasized. Skills are reinforced through constant and varied repetition of repertoire, with additional ensemble playing and technical exercises selected by the teacher. Note reading and rhythm are also emphasized. Group classes provide a fun and social atmosphere for musical peers, often providing that extra motivation each student needs. Even activities that appear to be "games" hold an important instructional purpose. Technical, ensemble, and listening skills are developed in the group environment.

Parents and siblings are expected to be good audience members during group lessons (see Recital Etiquette). If students are late for a group lesson, they should be careful not to interrupt the flow of the lesson in progress. Check with the teacher about the best time to join the group.

Reading Classes

String students who have mastered basic pitch and rhythm reading skills will benefit from MacPhail's reading classes. These classes are offered in addition to the group class. Since the course material is comprehensive and challenging, enrollment is based on a combination of instructor recommendation, a student's reading level, and a formula incorporating the student's grade level and Suzuki book level. Students enrolled in reading classes are expected to attend every class and complete all assignments. Parents attend classes with their child so they can help in the development of reading skills at home.

Piano students ages 7-11 who have completed Suzuki Piano Book One and a primer level method book are eligible to take a year-long note reading class that meets ten weeks per semester. This class meets more frequently than other piano group classes and is designed to build the confidence of the new note reader. Students perform Suzuki pieces for their class once a month. Students return to the Piano Group Class track after completing note reading. It is not required that students take the note reading class.

String Orchestras for String Students

When string students complete a reading class, or an equivalent form of study, they may join one of MacPhail's Suzuki orchestras. Placement in the first level orchestra occurs upon recommendation of the student's teacher or completion of the reading class. Placement in other orchestras is based on an audition process. The orchestras meet once a week and present performances throughout the year, including accompanying the annual Seniors' Concerts.

Students are exposed to the strong tradition within the standard orchestral repertoire of music composed only for strings – without winds, brass, or percussion.

These orchestras build a sense of community among MacPhail's Suzuki students and offer outstanding opportunities to build ensemble playing skills. Please see the Orchestral Policies section of this handbook for the Orchestra Attendance Policy.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

In addition to parents' active, ongoing role in their child's Suzuki music education, it is important to occasionally reflect on progress, challenges, and musical growth. Suzuki instructors will devote a lesson once a year for discussion of concerns and achievements regarding a student's musical study. This is a great opportunity for parents to ask questions about their role as "teacher at home," brainstorm for motivational activities, and address any musical stumbling blocks. Communication is the key to the parent-teacher-child relationship, and these annual conferences provide an excellent opportunity for feedback and support. Feel free to contact your teacher whenever questions or concerns arise.

Studio Recitals

Once per semester, each teacher holds a studio recital for all his or her students. Public performance offers every child the opportunity to be acknowledged for his or her musical achievements. Studio recitals bring the families of the private instructor together for a shared performance experience and a chance to get to know more families with the same instructor.

Department Recitals

Department recitals are an exciting chance to hear a variety of students from all Suzuki studios. These gatherings of the Suzuki program provide inspiration for younger players, leadership roles for older students, and a social environment for the celebration of every student's musical growth. Once a student has polished a piece to a high-performance level, they may be nominated to perform on these recitals by their teacher. Recitals are held on Friday evenings at 6:00 p.m. in Antonello Hall. Performers should dress for the occasion.

Recital Attendance Etiquette

- ❖ Arrive ten to fifteen minutes early for the recital.
- ❖ Be prepared to stay for the entire recital.
- ❖ After the recital has begun, leave and enter the room only if necessary and only during applause.
- ❖ Latecomers should wait in the hallway until they hear applause.
- ❖ Keep noise and visual distractions to a minimum. Video recording from the back of the room is acceptable. Flash pictures should only be taken after the recital when there is time for posed pictures.
- ❖ Young siblings are always welcome at recitals, but only for as long as their attention span allows. Please take them out in the hall before they become disruptive.
- ❖ Practice being an attentive listener.

By following these guidelines, we can ensure that recitals remain a positive part of our Suzuki experience.

Rehearsals and Recitals with an Accompanist (for string and flute students)

The accompanist plays an important role in a student's musical development and MacPhail provides accompanists for department and studio recitals at no additional cost to students. Accompaniment helps motivate students to practice and perform; it provides a sense of accomplishment and results in a professional performance. Students will reserve a time in their schedule to meet with the accompanist prior to their recitals. *Note: For department recitals, students who are late for their scheduled rehearsal with the accompanist will not be permitted to perform on the recital.*

MacPhail Opportunities

One of the advantages of studying at a community music school is the exposure to a wide range of events and special concerts. Suzuki students can participate in MacPhail programs such as the Crescendo Program for Piano and Violin, Achievement Day, and the Performance Festival. MacPhail's Master Class Series brings dozens of international artists and educators to MacPhail for masterclasses and workshops. Honors Recitals, All-School Recitals, and Concerto & Aria Concerts recognize exceptional student ability and invite young audiences to begin a life of attending arts events. Most of these events are free to MacPhail students and families. In addition to events at MacPhail, Suzuki students can register to attend Suzuki Institutes during the summer months in locations across the country. The MacPhail Suzuki program offers an Institute each summer for guitar and piano. Institutes provide a wonderful environment to meet and play with other students as well as to receive private instruction from trained institute teachers. Institutes are extracurricular and should not be considered a substitute for summer lessons.

Suzuki Tour Program

The Suzuki Tour program provides an opportunity for advanced Suzuki piano, flute, harp, guitar, and string students ages 13-18 to perform and travel together. The tour group travels to different international and domestic destinations and are usually scheduled in mid-late June. Concerts are performed in some of the premier concert venues throughout the world. During a tour year, students are expected to prepare tour ensemble music, attend extra rehearsals, and play in a tour send-off concert at MacPhail.

Buddy Program

The Buddy Program is a mentor/mentee practicing program among students in MacPhail's Suzuki Talent Education department. We connect students who are established on their instruments and who enjoy working with other kids! The Buddy Program is open to all instrument groups!

Mentees – Age minimum: 6 years old; Level Minimum: Folk Songs polished

Mentors – Age minimum: 12 years old; Level Minimum: Book 4

Lesson Policies

To get the most out of music study at MacPhail, families should make the commitment to consistent lesson attendance. Teachers make every effort to schedule lessons that are convenient for families and productive for students.

As a reminder, here are MacPhail's policy on missed lessons, which can also be found on www.MacPhail.org:

Lesson Makeup Policy

As a courtesy, please call or email your instructor in advance of any absence. Prior notification does not exempt students from payment. Students are charged for all the lessons for which they register, including those missed through student absence. Consider requesting an online lesson in the event of mild illness, inclement weather, or last-minute conflicts. In the event that the instructor cancels a lesson, a makeup lesson will be offered at a mutually convenient time. The makeup lesson may be an online lesson.

Emergency School Closings

The decision to close MacPhail due to weather is determined by safety conditions and is based on state advisories. MacPhail does not guarantee makeup lessons or classes for dates closed due to an emergency. Online lessons may be offered by your teacher in the event of a building closing. On-site classes will be cancelled. MacPhail is committed to remaining open whenever possible. To check for a closing, call 612.321.0100 for a recorded message or check MacPhail's website.

Summer Lesson Policy

Participation in MacPhail Suzuki Talent Education is a year-long commitment. Signing up for 6-7 summer lessons is recommended for continued progress. When arranging summer lessons at MacPhail, Suzuki teachers are prepared to be flexible and creative in meeting varied summer schedules of Suzuki families. Students who choose not to study during the summer sessions may have difficulty being placed with their current instructor for the fall semester.

Policy for Changing Teachers within the MacPhail Suzuki Program

The relationship with your Suzuki teacher is long-term. Many Suzuki students study with the same teacher during the entire time they are at MacPhail. In exceptional situations, switching to another teacher can be considered. In such circumstances, the MacPhail Suzuki faculty agree on the following procedure:

1. Try your present studio for a reasonable amount of time. It often takes at least one year to settle into a studio. If you have problems or concerns, bring them up with the teacher first. A resolution is often easily reached when communication is open. You can also plan a meeting with the teacher and Program Director for a discussion.
2. If you have been studying with your teacher for several years and feel that a change of teacher would be beneficial to your child, the first thing to do is to discuss it with

the current teacher, without the student present. You can arrange a meeting with the teacher or discuss it at your Parent-Teacher Conference.

3. If questions remain after this meeting, either party can call for a meeting between the director, the teacher, and the parent. Please do not approach a potential new teacher without first speaking with the director. If all agree that a new teacher is appropriate, the director will approach the new teacher and facilitate a transfer.

The MacPhail Suzuki Booster Club

The Suzuki Booster Club (formerly called MSA, the MacPhail Suzuki Association) is a parent volunteer organization that offers extra support for Suzuki program activities. Parents are automatically members of the Suzuki Booster Club. Parents are invited to attend Booster Club meetings once per month and to volunteer to assist with activities that support the Suzuki program. Activities include:

- ❖ Senior gifts and Senior Concert receptions
- ❖ Teacher recognition (flowers and faculty recital receptions)
- ❖ Tour student financial aid scholarships
- ❖ Bagel and refreshments sales
- ❖ Spirit Wear Sales

Visit www.MacPhail.org for more information.

The Suzuki Faculty Professional Development Fund

Unlike the former MSA, the new Booster Club does not collect dues. To fund Suzuki Professional Development, we created a new fund to support Suzuki teachers and their professional development activities.

MacPhail Suzuki teachers incorporate the latest tools in their teaching – learned through attending classes with nationally renowned Suzuki clinicians, workshops, and national conferences.

Your support will ensure that MacPhail Suzuki students are taught by the very best using the latest techniques. Visit the MacPhail website to donate. Simply check the [Suzuki Teacher Professional Development](#) box when completing your online gift. Your investment will have a direct impact on your student's experience.

Selection and Care of Your Instrument

Selecting the proper instrument is extremely important. It is **essential** that you consult with your teacher before you choose one. ***Do not purchase an instrument for your child without prior discussion with your studio teacher.*** Buy the best instrument you can afford, for the benefits to your child will far outweigh the initial punch to the pocketbook. A better instrument has been created with more care, is easier to play, and produces a finer tone. Good equipment helps make the rewards of playing more immediate. Please discuss the list of instrument and music supply shops found at the end of this section and the “Instruments for Sale” book at the Student Services Center with your teacher.

Violin, Viola, Cello, and String Bass

Size

One of the most important considerations is instrument size. Your teacher can measure your child to determine the proper size. Music stores don't always have personnel capable of doing this type of measurement. Instruments that are too big are difficult to play; don't try to save money by getting a size to “grow into.” If your child is close to the next size, you may want to rent the smaller size until you're ready to purchase the larger size.

Rent or Buy?

Several area stores rent and sell instruments. Some have “rent with option to buy” arrangements. Some offer “buy back” guarantees when you purchase the next size instrument from the same shop. Compare plans to find one that best suits your needs. The decision to purchase or rent is yours. Purchasing provides the opportunity to reinvest in your next instrument, but renting can be easier on the monthly budget and eliminates the need for resale.

Brand of Instrument

Most beginners will want to rent or buy an “outfit” that includes the instrument, case, and bow. Ask your teacher for assistance before selecting any instrument. All local shops allow you to take the instrument “on approval” to a lesson before you make a final commitment. Instruments should always be examined by your teacher before purchase to ensure that you get an instrument in good repair with proper fittings.

Bows

Be sure you choose a wood bow with horsehair, not a fiberglass bow with synthetic hair. While prices are similar, wood bows work much better and are more flexible. Wood bows do tend to be more breakable. Horsehair produces a better sound than the synthetic hair. Ask your teacher to check any bow before you make a final selection.

Upkeep and Repairs

Smaller instruments are surprisingly sturdy and don't usually need repair. The teacher should occasionally check to ensure that the bridge is not leaning and has not slipped. If the

instrument does sustain damage, bring it to a reputable string repair person. Don't try to fix anything yourself, even if it seems simple. A skilled artisan can make the instrument like new and maintain its resale value.

Strings need to be replaced every 6 months to a year, or as soon as decay is noticed. Some rental instruments come with old, "false" strings. Ask your teacher to check your newly rented instrument; if the strings are false, the store should replace them. Your teacher can advise you on preferable string brands. Keep an extra set of strings in your case. Strings don't often break, but it is important to have replacements on hand. Your teacher can show you how to put on a new string.

Bows make the string vibrate by "grabbing" the string. The rosin roughens the bow hair so it can better grab the strings. Bows need rosin applied for approximately every two hours of playing time. Parents usually need to help younger students do this for the first several months. The rosin and bow hair should never be touched by your hands, since oil from your skin blends with rosin to form a dirty, gummy substance.

Bows should be rehaired yearly. If you purchase or rent a used instrument, the bow may need to be rehaired; ask for your teacher's suggestion.

Rosin can accumulate on the instrument, so use a soft cloth to wipe off the strings and instrument every time you finish practicing. Do not wait until rosin has built up. If rosin has built up, you may purchase an effective, inexpensive violin cleaner, which a teacher or reputable string shop recommends. Don't clean or "shine" your instrument with anything else. Occasionally, rosin needs to be cleaned off the strings. Use alcohol but be very careful as it will remove the varnish.

Keep the instrument in its case when not in use. Instruments should be protected from extreme temperature variations and direct sunlight. Damage to varnish is usually irreparable. Avoid leaving the instrument in the car. Students can learn to take care of their instruments with guidance from the teacher and the parent. They can begin by wiping rosin from the strings; they can also take out and put away their instrument with care and respect. If you ever have questions about your instrument, always ask your teacher.

Harp

Choosing a Harp

When choosing a quality instrument for your child, the size of the instrument is crucial. Be sure to consult your teacher about size and model. Equally important are the height of the chair and footstools. Helping your child sit properly will make him or her more comfortable at the instrument and will encourage practice. The chair should be used only for harp practice and not for other purposes.

Harp Maintenance

1. Tune the harp daily. Consult with your teacher about the best tuning method (tuning fork, electronic tuner, piano). The success of your child's harp study is directly related to hearing correct, in-tune pitches, so regular tuning is very important.
2. Keep the harp clean. Dust it regularly with a clean, soft, dry cloth. High quality furniture polish should be used once a month (more often in the summer) to remove any oil or perspiration from the wood; these will destroy the finish if not removed. If only clean hands play the harp, strings should not need cleaning. The levers and surrounding area can be cleaned with a soft brush. Remember: Levers should be left down when the harp is not being played.
3. Keep good strings on the harp. If strings are false (the pitch wavers), fuzzy (gut strings), or have dents from the levers, they should be replaced. Replace strings with the same kind that came on your harp: gut with gut, nylon with nylon, wire with wire. A skeleton set of strings should be kept on hand as strings can break anytime. Wire strings should be changed at least every two years.
4. Find an appropriate, safe spot in your home to keep the harp away from high traffic areas and pets. It is a good idea to keep a harp against the wall when not in use. Do not keep it near radiators or direct sunlight. During the winter, it is a good idea to store the harp in a room with a humidifier. Find an attractive, comfortable spot that welcomes the student to daily practice.
5. Transport the harp with extreme care. Always move it with the cover on. Lay it down on the tuning pin side, not the lever side. In the winter, warm the car before putting the harp inside and cover the instrument with a blanket if you have a thin, flimsy cover. Never leave the harp in the car in hot or very cold weather. After unloading the harp outside, if it is necessary to leave it standing for a few seconds, always have someone hold onto the harp. A gust of wind can easily blow a harp over and cause severe damage.

Guitar

Choosing a Guitar

Child-size classical guitars come in a variety of non-standard sizes. These are often referred to as $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$. These size references are often misleading. To clarify: the length of the string from saddle to nut (the two bones from which strings are suspended) can vary in length from 44cm to 66.5cm. This variable and the size of the guitar's body must both be considered when choosing an instrument. Always choose an instrument under the advice of your teacher. Guitars are available at a few local musical shops and through the internet. Ask your teacher for web sites and make sure to check the bulletin boards at MacPhail for used guitars. You will also need a classical guitar foot stool (approximately \$15).

Guitar Maintenance

1. You should change your classical guitar nylon treble strings two times a year.
2. Guitars with solid wood sound boards need insert humidifiers.
3. Keep the inside of your guitar case clean.
4. Carry your books separately, not inside the guitar case.

5. Do not leave your guitar in the car. Avoid drastic temperature changes – especially hot. The guitar’s glue starts to soften at 110° F.

Piano

Buying a Piano

The following represent general guidelines you can use to purchase a piano. As always, consult with your teacher before purchasing any instrument.

1. *Decide on a budget.* Buy the best instrument you can afford and one of slightly higher quality than you think you deserve. Resist buying a “clunker” or “student piano.” A piano can be a wise investment if you choose the right instrument. Up to a certain point, pianos appreciate. You can continue to “trade-up” if you buy from a dealer; you will always get full value on a trade-in. In addition, fine pianos are less expensive to maintain in the long run.
2. *Learn about the different types of pianos: uprights and grands.* Upright (sometimes called vertical) pianos range in size from 36” to 60”. The smallest uprights are *spinets*; the larger ones are *studios* or *full size*. Grand pianos range in size from 4 ½’ (*baby grand*) to 9 ½’ (*concert grand*). Medium-sized grands (5 ½’ to 7 ½’) are most popular. In general, bigger pianos are preferred to smaller ones. Grand pianos have double, or repetitive, action which creates resistance in the keys. Grands also have longer strings, bigger soundboards, and more resonating parts than uprights. **Electronic keyboards (even digital ones) are not an acceptable alternative to a piano.** The tone and touch cannot compare to that of the grand pianos which children will be playing on during their lessons and at recitals.
3. *Purchasing a new piano.* Shop around at different piano dealers. Gather information about many brands in your price range. Listen to the different sales pitches as if they were from car dealers – don’t assume that everything they say is completely true. Once you’ve narrowed down your choices, play each instrument. Check for the following: even tone, even action, working pedals. Listen to the sound with the lid up and down. Have an experienced pianist play the instrument, if possible. Ask to try the piano in your home to listen for drastic changes in the sound. If you’re not sure about the deal you’re getting, walk away.
4. *Purchasing a used piano.* Excellent used pianos are available for purchase. You can find used pianos through three sources: piano technicians or rebuilding shops, used piano dealers, and newspaper ads. Ask about the history of the instrument and about specific work that has been done to the instrument (action rebuilding, voicing, etc.). Play the instrument and check for the same things as with new pianos. Make sure the piano is in tune when you play it. Get the opinion of a piano tuner or technician before making a final decision.

Piano Maintenance

1. Place your piano in a pleasing part of your home – one that is free of major distractions but part of your living area (in other words, not a dark corner of your basement).

2. The piano should not be placed near radiators or hot air ducts and should be at least one foot away from outside walls.
3. Teach respectful handling of the piano. Encourage children to explore the sounds quietly, with one finger if necessary.
4. Tune your piano at least twice a year during times of stable humidity. A tuning costs about \$75-\$100. Children are extremely sensitive to out-of-tune pianos.
5. Control the humidity in your house as much as possible. Wide swings in humidity are very damaging to a piano. Piano manufacturers recommend a relative humidity of 40-50%. Investigate three different types of humidifiers: central humidifier for forced air furnaces, room humidifier, and individual piano climate control systems.
6. Other kinds of piano servicing, such as voicing or action regulation, may be necessary.
7. Treat your piano's finish carefully by using good judgement about what objects to place on it.

Shops for Instruments and Music Supplies

Always call a music store before you visit to ensure someone will be available to help you. Consult with your teacher in advance regarding any instrument or product you plan to purchase.

Instrument Sales and Repairs

Violin, Viola, Cello, String Bass

Name	Website	Phone	Address
LOCAL			
House of Note	www.houseofnote.com	952-929-0026	7202 Minnetonka Blvd. St. Louis Park
John Waddle	www.maestronet.com/waddle	651-698-4692	2032 St. Clair Ave. St. Paul
Quinn Violins	www.quinviolins.com	612-378-5470	1081 21 st Ave. SE Minneapolis
All Strings Attached	www.allstringsattached.com	763-542-9542	8224 Olson Mem. Hwy. Golden Valley
Claire Givens Violins	www.givensviolins.com	612-375-0708	1201 Marquette Ave. Suite 150, Minneapolis
NATIONAL			
Shar Music	www.sharmusic.com	800-248-7427	Ann Arbor, MI
Johnson String	www.johnsonstring.com	617-964-0954	Newton Center, MA
William Harris Lee & Co.	https://whlee.com	312-786-0459	Chicago, IL
Reuning & Sons Violins	www.reuning.com	617-262-1300	Brookline, MA

*Many national shops will ship instruments to you for trial. Consult individual website for details.

Harp

Name	Website	Phone	Address
Lyon and Healy Harps	www.lyonhealy.com	877-621-3881	
Kolacny Music	www.kolacnymusic.com	800-870-3167	

Guitar

Name	Website	Phone	Address
Podum Music	www.thepodium.com	612-331-8893	425 14 th Ave. SE Minneapolis

Piano

Name	Website	Phone	Address
Schmitt Music Centers	www.schmittmusic.com	Many locations	See local directory for store nearest you.
Music Connection Pianos	www.connectwithmusic.com	651-464-5252	77 8 th Ave. SW. Forest Lake

Local Music Stores for Recordings and Sheet Music

Name	Website	Phone	Address
Groth Music Co.	www.grothmusic.com	952-884-4772	8056 Nicollet Ave. S. Bloomington
Schmitt Music Centers	www.schmittmusic.com	Many locations	See local directory for store nearest you.
House of Note	www.houseofnote.com	952-929-0026	7202 Minnetonka Blvd. St. Louis Park
Barnes and Noble	www.bn.com	Many locations	See local directory for store nearest you.

Other Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address
Shar Music	www.sharmusic.com	800-248-7427	Ann Arbor, MI
Southwest Strings	www.swstirngs.com	800-528-3230	
Young Musicians	www.young-musicians.com	800-826-8648	
Honeysuckle Music	www.honeysucklemusic.com	612-644-8545	Suzuki Guitar Materials
Sheet Music Plus	www.sheetmusicplus.com		
Kentucky Music Supply	www.kymusiconline.com	270-842-8022	
Fluteworld	www.fluteworld.com	248-855-0410	
Amazon	www.amazon.com		

Orchestra Policies

Orchestra Expectations

The Suzuki String Orchestras focus on building skills related to orchestra membership, which is an extension of what you learn in your private studio lessons. The orchestras will work on sight-reading, note reading, and playing together, both within your own section and with the orchestra. Bowings will be important! The literature will develop some or all these skills at different times; some pieces may be technically challenging for many students while others may be more manageable so that the focus can be on phrasing, bowing, dynamics and tempo. The String Orchestra repertoire highlights pieces written for strings alone, rather than for a full orchestra with brass, winds, and percussion. There is a wealth of repertoire for string orchestra, often performed by the SPCO and played on classical radio stations.

Please arrive prepared for rehearsal each week. This means:

1. Individual practice at home so you can play your complete part accurately and at tempo in only two weeks. Control of your individual part is the basic material you bring to rehearsal. Your job at rehearsal is to be flexible to match and blend with others. Although the music **may or may not LOOK challenging**, especially compared to current solo repertoire, the challenging work comes in putting the ensemble together.
2. Arrive on time – In orchestra this means being in your chair with the stand set up, music on the stand, and ready to play at the time rehearsal begins.
3. Bring all necessary equipment: instrument, stand (**labeled with your name**), **pencil**, and music. Every player has his/her own part and is responsible for marking it. If you share a part and use the other person's stand, please keep your part close by to mark with pertinent information. All parts must be marked so that everyone has the latest information in their part to practice at home.
4. Ask questions if you need more explanation. It is true—there is no such thing as a bad question, and we need to make sure everyone understands what is happening in rehearsal.
5. Listen attentively when other sections are working on passages during rehearsal. Usually, what a conductor says to one section will also relate to something you play, so make sure you are paying attention! Point to your music and feel the rhythm of your part while another section rehearses a passage. This way, you will start learning how the parts fit together. (During rehearsal when you have a rest, you should figure out who is playing and what rhythm they play. When you are playing, you should figure out who else is playing and how their rhythm compares with yours. When you play the same rhythm as another part you should notice their bowing and match the bow direction, amount of bow, bow placement and articulation.)
6. Always contribute positively. Each person is important to our overall success

as an ensemble.

7. Assist with setting up and taking down of the room as directed by the conductor.
8. Remember to have fun and get to know the other members of the orchestra.
Rehearsal time is short and intense with little time for talking, so limit your talking to before or after the rehearsal.

Orchestra Attendance Policy

Attend orchestra every Saturday. Your job in orchestra is to develop ensemble which is the art of being together. Whenever anyone misses, there is a missing piece in the ensemble puzzle. We want you to have the most exciting orchestra experience possible. When everyone has good attendance, the conductor can move forward each week and does not need to repeat instructions for those who were absent.

To give you the highest quality orchestra experience, we have an attendance policy like other youth orchestras or sports teams:

Each student is allowed TWO absences per concert cycle. * If you know that you will be unable to attend more than twice, you should notify the conductor, the string group coordinator, and your private teacher and not perform in the concert at the end of the cycle. In many cases, the conductors, at his/her discretion will still encourage you to attend rehearsals as valuable learning can still occur. If you are not performing on the concert, you may or may not be asked to attend the dress rehearsal.

If you know you must be absent, please give a written notice to your conductor as far in advance as possible (see emails on the front page). For last minute emergencies, leave a voice message for your conductor or the String and Orchestra Coordinator.

Students absent a third time during a concert cycle may request to participate in the concert. Exceptions will only be considered if at least one of your absences was outside of your control (e.g., severe illness, dangerous weather, death in the family). The conductor, the Program Director, and your teacher will discuss your request and make the final decision. Some of the factors that will affect the decision will be your promptness, preparation, participation in the rehearsal, whether advance notice has been given, and the timing of the absences within the cycle. The decision made by the conductor will be final. Petitions should be made in writing to the conductor and String and Orchestra Coordinator, Suzuki String Coordinator no later than noon on the Wednesday following the third absence.

*A concert cycle consists of the concert and all the rehearsals of the music to be performed at that concert. Please check your Saturday group/orchestra calendar, so you are aware of when each concert occurs and assess how many rehearsals you will miss. Communication is the key to making things easier for everyone, so if you can let your conductor know of absences at the beginning of each session, it reduces follow-up work for all parties.

Orchestra Dress Code

A performance should draw attention to the music and not the performers themselves. A dress code is a helpful guideline for the members of each group.

Chamber

Girls: All black, with dressy black shoes. If socks or hose are worn, please make sure that they are black. Skirts and dresses must be calf-length or longer. Tops should have straps, preferably sleeves.

Boys: All black, including black dressy shoes and socks.

DaCapo, Camerata and Sinfonia

Girls: White top, black bottom, with dressy black shoes. If socks or hose are worn, please make sure that they are black. Skirts and dresses must be calf-length or longer. Tops should have straps, preferably sleeves.

Boys: White shirt and black pants, including black dressy shoes and socks. Ties are up to the conductor's discretion.