



## Suzuki Voice 40th Anniversary in 2026 Suzuki Voice was born in Vantaa, Finland in 1986

Suzuki Voice was born in Finnish Sauna in December 1985. I was talking out loud about ideas for my doctoral thesis, when my future husband threw the idea in our sauna: ‘Why do you not start to teach expectant mothers using the Suzuki Method?’ That started The Suzuki Voice journey, research and all the travelling. Finnish folk song ‘Satu meni saunaan’ (Satu went to Sauna) is the second song of the internationally published *Suzuki Voice School Volume 1*.

The final decision of Suzuki Voice was made in Japan, 1986. I had received an invitation to come to study to *Matsumoto Talent Education Institute* from Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, Waltraud Suzuki and Mrs. Haruko Kataoka during the *European Suzuki Conference* held in Finland, March 1986. The approval of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki and Waltraud Suzuki was the driving force behind the development of the method, as well as my own enthusiasm towards children’s singing. This changed my own life, my family’s life and all my future plans. I was honoured to know Dr. Shinichi Suzuki 12 years and Mrs. Waltraud Suzuki 14 years. I am thankful of their support during these years and I always remember their advises. Our correspondence continued to Mrs. Suzuki’s death December 2000. Under ISA Web site *Matsumoto Suzuki Graduates and Pioneers* one can find my memories.

### Growing Through Singing – The Suzuki Voice Program and Its Development 1986—2002

*The Suzuki Voice Development project* (1986—2002) was the second *Program of Applied Research* Doctor of Music degree in the history of Sibelius University. It was a 15-year Practical Follow-up Study at my *Talent Education Institute of Singing* (TEIS), where the Suzuki Voice Program was fully developed with the children. The program was called *Laulusuzukimenetelmä* in Finnish and it was founded in February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1986. At the beginning it was called in English *Suzuki Singing*, then later *Singing in the Suzuki Style* and since 2000 *The Suzuki Voice Program*, in short *Suzuki Voice*.

*My Doctor of Music degree project* included teaching experiment, development of teaching materials, teaching methods and levels for teaching and exams. In my report (2002) the purpose of the project was: 1) To examine the basic results of teaching period; 2) To introduce the Suzuki Voice Program’s special features and its relationship to the Suzuki Method and to speculate on the birth and continuance of each participant child’s interest in music; 3) To introduce the teaching material that was developed during the project; 4) To explain teaching and exam levels to describe the Suzuki Voice Teacher Training system. *My dissertation was completed in February 28<sup>th</sup> 2003, and I received the Doctor of Music degree.*



The first Suzuki Voice expectant mother and baby group in Vantaa, Finland, 1987  
 An early Suzuki voice baby group in Vantaa, Finland, 1988.

## Human-being Education

The Suzuki Voice program is based on *the Suzuki Method*, where music learning starts from the beginning by *listening, imitating and repeating*. Regardless of the culture, it happens in the same way in which a child is learning his mother tongue. Therefore, the Suzuki Method is called *Mother Tongue Approach Method*. This principle is very suitable for teaching singing. Speaking and singing are the same functional phenomenon, produced by the same physiological mechanism. In the Suzuki Voice Program, *each child's personal voice is nurtured* even in group singing.

Suzuki Method is also called *the Talent Education Method*. Dr. Suzuki believed that talent is not inborn but it is developed by creating *the right environment and by nurturing ability*. Every child is talented in its own way. He believed that *all children can learn*. His philosophy is simple. Create the right environment and a child will learn. The person who is remarkably talented has the ability to adapt quickly and sensitively to his environment. Practising the song is not enough; ability is developed through perfect repetitions. The more perfect repetitions, the more quickly ability will be developed. This is the way talent is born. This applies not only to music learning but to everything that we do in our lives. It is *Human-being Education* as Dr. Suzuki himself described it.

*The Suzuki Voice Program* has been specially designed to learn *vocal technique and style in a progressive manner*. It continues with teaching levels *from prenatal to adulthood* in order to understand child's and young adults' world supporting their *personal development with singing*. Learning process to sing starts through listening, positive feelings and experiences, emotions and physical affection. Suzuki teachers work together with the family. Suzuki describes cooperation as *a triangle*, where a child, a parent and a teacher interact. At first it is important to create a positive environment for music learning both at the lessons and at home. *The feeling of security* is important in the teaching of small children. A real *encouragement* for learning directly affects the child's wish to learn. *Learning with joy* was one of Dr. Suzuki's favorite phrases.

Children learn songs in each teaching level at first in their own native language, but the Suzuki Voice Program is also *educating* the child to a larger *awareness of internationality*. Through singing the students and teachers are able to understand more about different cultures and languages. This follows one wish of Dr. Suzuki: *music is able to promote peace in the world*.

### **Voice was accepted as an International Suzuki Instrument in 2003**

*The Voice is an inner instrument*, so it is impossible to touch it at the same way as an instrument which you can see. In Suzuki Voice the vocal instrument is built step by step using different kinds of *practical work for vocal skills* exercises, which support children's singing. The aim of this practical work is to produce *a natural singing voice*. These exercises relate to relaxation, breathing, posture, articulation (jaw, tongue, lips), phonation and resonating exercises.

In 1988 I asked Mette Heikkinen to join Suzuki Voice and we developed together *Volume 2* and recording 1988—1989. I became ESA Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainer in 1991 and Mette in 1993. In *Volume 3* my purpose was that Suzuki Voice students are able to sing also with the other Suzuki instruments. Volume 3 recording was made by my Suzuki Voice Students with the instrumental group in 1993 and again with the pianist in 2009. I followed Dr. Suzuki, who had separate Chamber music Volumes in Japan.

Step by step Suzuki Voice Teacher Training levels were accepted in ESA board. The last *Suzuki Voice Level 5* was accepted in September 2003. The same month *ISA board accepted Voice as a Suzuki Instrument*. This was a long-awaited decision and gave us a lot of delight. I was asked to build the ISA Voice Committee in 2004. I was a chairwoman of the ESA and the ISA Voice Committee until 2018.



Eriko Shimada was the first ESA Level 5 Suzuki Voice Teacher from Japan / England. The photo is after her Suzuki Voice Teacher Level 5 Recital in London, 2017. From the left Amelia Seyssel (USA), Analia Capponi-Savolainen (Argentina, Finland), Mette Heikkinen (Finland), Eriko Shimada (Japan, England) and her pianist, Dr. Päivi Kukkamäki (Finland), Katrina Pezzimenti (Australia) and Mervi Sipola Maliniemi (Finland)



## Suzuki Voice Community grows Step by Step

In early years many things effected for the distribution of the Suzuki Voice Method. At first Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki warned me that I need to travel a lot. I received invitations to Conferences to give presentations and lectures and to perform. I made over 50 concert / conference trips to 22 different countries and met singers and voice teachers, who wanted to specialize in Suzuki Voice. My own Suzuki Voice students played a major role in spreading the method. I travelled 28 times with my own Suzuki Voice students (age 4 months – 23-year-olds) and their families. The participants in the International Conferences saw in practice how the Suzuki Voice Method worked.

The documentary *Suzuki Singing in Finland* (1986—1991) was sent to over 25 countries. The recording was made at City of Vantaa Audio centre in 1991. The Finnish articles about Suzuki Voice were translated into different languages from the request of Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki and the articles were sent to the main associations. I sent reports of the progress of the Suzuki Voice to Japan and yearly reports with photos of Suzuki Voice Students to the ESA board meetings, where Mrs. Suzuki, *the Vice president of International Suzuki Association*, was very often at present.



After Suzuki Voice Performance Christian age 1,5 with Dr. Päivi Kukkamäki saying hello to Dr. Shinichi Suzuki in Matsumoto, Japan, 1989

## Suzuki Parents and Grandparents, a Wonderful Resource and Support for a Suzuki Teacher!

*Suzuki-Families Association* was founded in 1988. Our first trips and gatherings with Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki were in Sweden (1988), in Japan (Tokyo and Matsumoto 1989), in Scotland (1990), in USA (1990), in Australia (1991 and 1993), in Japan and South-Korea (1993) and with Waltraud Suzuki in Ireland (1995) and in Japan (1999). Without the collaboration between *Suzuki-Families Association*, *Talent Education Institute of Singing* and support of *City of Vantaa*, most of the unforgettable national and international happenings would have not been possible to achieve. Suzuki-Families Association organized many *International Songs for Sharing* conferences and different kind of recitals including all Suzuki Voice Teachers' exam recitals in Finland until 2018.



The first Suzuki Voice trip to meet Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki during  
*The 8th European Suzuki Conference* held in Borlänge, Sweden, 1988

Suzuki-Families Association organized 13 Opera and Musical productions and one Christmas movie. All operas and musicals were performed in original languages in Finnish, in English, in German or in Spanish. Also, foreign teachers-in-training with their own students participated in these productions. Two productions accompanied by the orchestra were specially composed to Suzuki Voice students: *Roope* -opera in 2007 composed by Timo-Juhani Kyllönen and *Snow-White and Rose-Red* -musical in 2012 composed by Kimmo Ruotsala. The very first Suzuki Voice Production in Finnish was *Toukka* ooppera (*Bug* 'opera' in English) with children of different ages including 24 babies with the mothers in Vantaa, Finland, 1988. Also, TV-programs (1991 TV 3 Naistenhuone - makasiini, 1996 TV 1 Vekkari, 1998 MTV 3 Huomenta Suomi) and a few short films were made about Suzuki Voice.



*Snow-White and Rose-Red* -musical in Vantaa, Finland, 2012





Suzuki Voice group attending *the 9th Suzuki Method International Conference* in Matsumoto, Japan, 1989

These active years are full of all kinds of memories, but one of the most pleasant ones happened with Mrs. Waltraud Suzuki in Dublin, Ireland, 1995. I gave presentations about Suzuki Voice on the second floor of the school and at that time Mrs. Suzuki was already unable to use the stairs. Very quickly two Suzuki Voice fathers made a so called ‘Queen’s chair’ from their hands and Mrs. Suzuki was carried upstairs. The youngest Suzuki Voice baby was my own 5-week-old son, and he made a lot of intonations during the lesson, when other Suzuki Voice students sung around him with Mrs. Suzuki. Being a singer herself, Waltraud was the Godmother of the Suzuki Voice Program.



Dr. Kukkamäki’s last visit with Mrs. Waltraud Suzuki in Matsumoto, Japan, 1999

I am thankful for the support of my own family. I could have not done this work without my husband and my 4 children or my parents, who supported me through the years. Many teachers-in-training lived in our house, at my parents' or at my Institute. Children of my siblings were also involved in the Suzuki Voice Activity. I am so grateful to my mother Paula Mäenpää, who passed away in December 2024. She produced teaching materials to Suzuki Voice Program: hand-made finger puppets and colouring pictures to all songs. She made many costumes for the productions and Finnish National dresses for the concert trips. Talent Education Institute's Logo *Let us sing – Laulakaamme* was designed and illustrated by my mother.

Because *Suzuki Voice* became my life's work, it became important to my own family as well. It touched the lives of my students and their families, my teacher-trainees and later their students and over the years we created together new Suzuki Voice communities around the world. I always tried to have the same principles as Dr. Suzuki had in *Matsumoto Talent Education Institute*, where we all belonged to *the Happy Suzuki Family* no matter where we came from.



Four generations in the Suzuki Voice lesson during *International Convention and Pan-Pacific Conference* in Adelaide, Australia, 1991. Behind Dr. Päivi Kukkamäki is her grandmother Dagmar Mäntysaari, in front right is her daughter Petra with her grandmother and Päivi's mother Paula Mäenpää.

### **Suzuki Voice Teacher Education started in ESA in 1998**

Suzuki Voice Teacher Education started in Europe in 1998 (ESA), in Australia in 2001 (PPSA) and in USA in 2005 (SAA). There are now trained Suzuki Voice teachers over 25 countries in ESA, PPSA, SAA and in TERI. The first Suzuki Voice teacher from each country makes important pioneering work. For example, in Europe is 27 different languages, and teachers needed to translate the songs into their own language. The first International Suzuki Voice School Volume 1 was published in 2022 and we are waiting for the ISA approved Suzuki Voice School Volume 2 and 3 to be published.



Suzuki Voice has seven Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainers. Their work and their dedication toward Suzuki Voice have been astonishing. Katrina Pezzimenti from Australia was accepted as the third ESA and the first PPSA Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainer in 2006. She is the first Singer in the world, who made ESA Level 5 Suzuki Voice Teacher exam in 2004 in Finland. She is the ESA and the ISA Suzuki Voice committee member and since 2018 the chairwoman of the ISA Voice Committee.

Analia Capponi-Savolainen became the fourth ESA Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainer in 2012. She became the chairwoman of the ESA Voice Committee and the member of the ISA Voice Committee in 2018. Analia became Doctor of Music at University of the Arts HKI (Sibelius-Akatemia) in 2025. Mervi Sipola-Maliniemi became the fifth ESA Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainer in 2016. She is the ESA Voice Committee member and the chairwoman of *Suzuki Voice Families Union Association* since 2018.

There are two Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainers in SAA. I met Mary Hofer the first time during *The Suzuki Teachers Conference* in San Francisco, USA, 1990. She became SAA Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainer in 2009 and she has been the member of the ISA Voice Committee since 2004. *Singing Across the Ocean Exchange Program* was between Finnish and American Suzuki Voice students during the years 1995—2001. Amelia Seyssel completed ESA Suzuki Voice Teacher Level 5 exam in 2014 and she became SAA Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainer in 2018. Suzuki Voice students are participating the 1<sup>st</sup> time *Early Music Ensemble and Master Class* (SAA - ASTA) in San Francisco, California, February 2026.

Many Suzuki Voice teachers have also passed away during these 40 years. Each of them gave valuable knowledge to the Suzuki Voice Community. Jaume Fargas i Fernandes passed away in 2019. I met him during *Suzuki Voice Workshop* in Reykjavik, Iceland, 1992. All these years he helped by making computer notations from my handmade music notes and teaching materials following my mother's guidelines. We founded together *Songs for Sharing* event in Barcelona, Spain, 1999. Since then, there have been 15 this kind of events in many countries. We also planned together *Suzuki Voice Star* logos. Jaume's *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* – decorations are under [www.suzukivoice.com](http://www.suzukivoice.com)



14<sup>th</sup> International *Songs for Sharing Suzuki Voice Conference* in Vantaa, Finland 2018.  
Participants came from 18 different countries.



## **Suzuki Voice has become an important Part of Life**

The Suzuki Method and its teaching material have proven to be functional. I am happy to see how the International Suzuki Voice Community has grown over the years. *Growing Through Singing* basic idea was awaken a child's love to music through singing. Although it was not the only purpose, many Suzuki Voice students have chosen voice or music as profession (opera, solo, music theatre or music science) and work now as musicians, voice teachers / Suzuki Voice teachers or solo singers in Finland and abroad.

I am thankful to the worldwide Suzuki Voice Community: Suzuki Voice students and families, Suzuki Voice Teachers-in-Training, Suzuki Voice Teachers and Suzuki Voice Teacher Trainers. Thankfully I follow now, how Suzuki Voice move on.

Welcome to Finland to join *40th Anniversary Celebration!*

*The Suzuki Voice International Conference* is held in April 9—13 Vantaa - HKI, Finland, 2026

Let's have an unforgettable *Suzuki Voice 40th Anniversary* with Dr. Shinichi Suzuki's words:

*Wish for Beautiful Tone, beautiful Heart*

My warm thank-you for these remarkable years to all of you!

*Keep on singing the Happy Suzuki Way!*



Dr. Päivi Kukkamäki  
The Founder of the Suzuki Voice Program  
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*Petra and Päivi in Adelaide, Australia, 1991*