



2022 MNjcc Suzuki Summer Music and Arts Camp Teacher Bios

Gretchen Paxson-Abberger – 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 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 since 1999, and directs the MNjcc Suzuki Summer Music Camp since 2010. 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.

Tricia Balmer – cello, adult string ensemble



Tricia Balmer has a Bachelor of Music in Performance, and a degree in Social Cultural Anthropology, both from the University of Toronto. Her Suzuki training includes cello and violin, completed in Canada, the United States and Europe. Experienced as a workshop clinician, she has worked for the Toronto Middle and High School Music Festivals, as well as Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ottawa, and Montreal Suzuki Schools. Tricia has been on the faculty for Southwestern Suzuki Institute, in Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario, since 2003. Other Suzuki Institute teaching programs included St. John's NLFD, the Oakville Summer Music Camp and Huckleberry Summer Music Camp. Tricia presently teaches cello and co-directs the Etobicoke Suzuki School of Music where she has been on faculty

since 1990. She has conducted string orchestras at the Suzuki Strings School of Guelph, the Toronto District School Board, and the Etobicoke Summer Music Camp. Tricia specializes in playing and performing chamber music and freelances in the Toronto area.

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 MNjcc Suzuki Program studying violin, and she has taught for many years at the Suzuki camp. Rebecca's yoga class for musicians is a welcome addition to an active, busy day, offering a chance to explore new movements focused on

connecting breath to actions. The class has often created a demo performance for the Friday concert.

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.

Dana Dallal - pottery



Dana has been involved in the creative arts since she was a young child. She spent many years working as a women's wear designer in the UK before having her own children and retraining in ceramics. Dana has natural empathy and cheerfulness and loves spending time with people. She now teaches children, and adults how to make pots while pursuing her own studio practice.

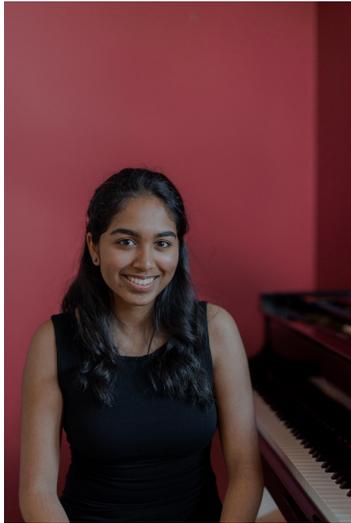
Kavin Dhanasekaran – camp assistant (piano)



Kavin is a high school student and pianist attending Unionville High School, and part of the Arts Unionville piano program. Over the past three years, he has been part of many musical projects at school. These endeavours include accompanying others and collaborating with fellow pianists on multi-piano works. He has been very privileged to work with string, vocal, and brass soloists, as well as the school choir and symphonic band.

He has attended many Suzuki summer programs throughout the years, including the Southwestern Ontario Suzuki Institute. Currently taught by Clayton Scott in Toronto, he is a keen musician ambitious about his future.

Sanjana Dhanasekaran – piano, camp assistant



Sanjana Dhanasekaran began her studies at the age of four under the Suzuki method. She later transitioned to the R.C.M.T curriculum in 2016 with Clayton Scott and earned her Performer's ARCT in 2020. In the following years, Sanjana completed her secondary education at Unionville High School as a piano major in the Arts Unionville program; through the program, she had a variety of solo, collaborative and interdisciplinary performance experiences: most notably the first movement of Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the Unionville High School Symphony Orchestra at Flato Markham Theatre.

Sanjana is an adaptable student and player, and has performed in masterclasses for respected pianists such as Anton Nel, Joseph Rackers, Serouj Kradjian, Anya Alexeyev, Gregory Oh, and Valery Lloyd-Watts. Her honest playing has won her recognition, most recently the "Coup de Coeur" in her category of the 2021 edition of the Canadian Music Competition, and the Prix du Public for her performance in the 2021 Ottawa Chamberfest Rising Stars showcase. She participated in the Texas State International Piano Festival and Orford Academy with André Laplante and Ronan O'Hora in the summer of 2021, and looks forward to another rewarding summer of music making at the upcoming Texas State IPF and Tuckamore Festival.

Sanjana currently teaches from her home studio and at the Stouffville Academy of Music and Dance. She completed the first year of her Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance at the University of Ottawa under the tutelage of David Jalbert, and is currently in the midst of a year-long academic sabbatical studying with Dmitri Levkovich.

Diana Dawydchak – violin, fiddling



Diana is in the fourth year of her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto studying Classical Violin Performance under the tutelage of Dr. Timothy Ying. Diana has been a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada for its 2020 and 2021 seasons. This past summer, Diana attended Bowdoin International Music Festival on scholarship where she studied with Ayano Ninomiya. In June 2021, Diana attended the Online Solo Strings Intensive (OSSI) where she studied with Ani Kavafian and Arnaud Sussmann. At OSSI, she was chosen to play in a masterclass for Benjamin Beilman. Diana has performed in masterclasses for Andrew Wan, Jonathan Crow, Stephen Rose, Conrad Chow, Erika Raum and Marie Bérard to name a few. Diana has also had the opportunity of assisting Jonathan Crow as his faculty assistant at the Interprovincial Music Camp.

Since the age of 4, Diana has demonstrated her passion for performing and love for all genres of music. At a young age she was exposed to Canadian Old Time Fiddle Music and became hooked. Since the age of seven, 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 in Duet and Gospel. She is a two time Canadian Open Fiddle Champion, Ontario Open Champion, Southwestern Ontario Open Champion and Northern Ontario Open Champion. Diana is also well versed in the American Bluegrass fiddling style. She has competed internationally winning the title of Junior Runner up at the Grand Master Fiddle Championship in Nashville, Tennessee and the Tennessee State Fiddle Championship. Diana is a multi-instrumentalist and performs with her brother, (DnA) Diana and Andrew. There you can find her fiddling, step dancing, playing the keyboard and French button accordion.

At the age of 16, Diana along with her brother Andrew recorded their first album in Nashville, Tennessee and were showcased on Toronto's CP24 Breakfast Television. Their most recent single, "Reborn" is available on all music streaming platforms. DnA performs at many musical events in Ontario such as ceilidhs, festivals, showcases and private events. They have performed at the Toronto Christmas Market, Toronto's Harbourfront Centre Canada Day Festival, World Fiddle Day at the Aga Khan Museum to name a few. They are frequently invited guests of Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy and have shared the stage with them at numerous shows and festivals including Casino Rama, Roy Thomson Hall, Centre in the Square, Greenbridge Celtic Folk Festival, ArtsFest Waterdown. With a passion for teaching, Diana has completed her Suzuki Book 1 teacher training course and is currently on faculty at the Miles Nadal JCC Suzuki School

where she teaches both fiddle and pop music. She also teaches both classical and fiddle privately at her home studio in Toronto.

Veronika Kolarska – camp assistant (violin and piano)



Veronika Kolarska is a young and spirited violinist that has been learning the violin ever since the age of 9. She studied primarily with Nancy Lokan and is currently playing under the tutelage of Bronson Kwan. For five years, Veronika has taken part in the MNJCC Suzuki program where she has been playing in string ensembles and performing solo repertoire. One of the most memorable experiences from the program was playing *Theme from Schindler's List* by John Williams on the *Violin of Hope*, at the 2020 Thanks to Dr. Suzuki concert. This was a very special violin as it belonged to Mr. Gouthsmith, a violin lover who was imprisoned with his violin in the Auschwitz concentration camp during WW2.

Alongside performing, Veronika is also passionate about helping the community. She has been a past assistant counselor at the Suzuki camp during the summer of 2020. She enjoyed supporting the staff and young musicians and is looking forward to helping out again this summer.

During the next year, she plans to continue building an advanced repertoire and is excited to be a part of the Kindred Spirits Orchestra for their 2022-2023 concert season.

Nancy Lokan – violin, viola, chamber music



Nancy Lokan started her violin studies in Ottawa, studying with Walter Prystawski, former concertmaster of the National Arts Centre Orchestra. She started playing professionally in solo and chamber music as a teenager. After her degree in music at the University of Toronto she joined the Canadian Forces String Ensemble based in Ottawa. After moving back to Toronto Nancy began exploring the Suzuki method of teaching while raising her three children. All three of her children have grown up in the Suzuki world and have embraced music. Now one of her grandsons is also part of the program. She teaches privately, and group and ensemble classes.

Ryan Lokan - camp assistant (violin)



Ryan Lokan began studying with Gretchen Paxson Abberger and attending the MNJCC Suzuki violin program from the age of 5. After attending Etobicoke School of the Arts' strings program, Ryan studied in Sir Wilfred Laurier University's music program under Julie Baumgartel. Ryan has also studied under Burton Kaplan in New York. Musical Theatre has been an important part of his musical career, beginning with plays at the Toronto Youth Theatre. Ryan then studied classical voice under Helga Tucker of the Royal Conservatory. Ryan has spent the past few summers teaching ukulele, singing, and violin at the National Music Camp of Canada. Ryan has also been playing with the Kitchener Waterloo Chamber Orchestra this season.

Erika Nielsen – 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 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. Erika 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 Resonance Baroque Ensemble and fellow faculty at NMC. 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 ELO tribute band Strange Magic.

Amanda Penner - violin, viola, chamber music



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.

Cheryl Reid - drumming, ukulele



Cheryl Reid is a professional musician and educator who has been teaching for over 30 years. Cheryl has a Bachelor of Music Education from Dalhousie University. Cheryl teaches subsidized ukulele classes in several Toronto schools with Melanie Doane's charitable organization, USchool, and also works as an occasional teacher with the TDSB. She also continues to perform professionally as a drummer, percussionist and ukulele player. Cheryl has toured all over Canada, the United States and Australia with Ember Swift and her recording credits include Ember Swift, Arlene Bishop and Garnet Rogers.

Cheryl is happy to be returning to teach at the MNJCC Suzuki Camp

Kate Shaner – violin, viola



Kate is a dedicated and passionate Suzuki teacher, music educator and arts administrator, who brings enthusiasm and energy to each of her interests. 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 with her husband Rabbi Jordan Shaner and their son.

Elena Spanu – violin, CAD (Creative Ability Development improvisation)



Elena Spanu started playing the violin at the tender age of three. She began her studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto Ontario after signaling to her mother she wanted 'that' while pointing to the television screen of children playing the violin. She continued to develop her skills at Western University where she received a Bachelor of Musical Arts. It is there that she discovered her interest in Baroque violin performance and moved on to pursue an Artists Diploma

in the subject while at the University of Toronto under the direction of Jeanne Lamon and other members of Tafelmusik.

Elena currently holds the chair of principal second violin with the North York Concert

Orchestra and plays regularly with the Niagara Symphony. As a freelancer, she also plays with orchestras and chamber groups in and out of Toronto. Elena has a keen ability to play sensitively with other musicians. She enjoys using this aspect of her skillset in aiding and fulfilling the powerful collective music making of an ensemble.

Elena has always enjoyed listening to the sounds and grooves of folk music, finding it to be uplifting and energizing. The isolation period of the pandemic created a space for her to master her favourite tunes and explore the genres of Old Time and Irish music.

Thanks to the prominence of virtual environments, she has had the opportunity to study under the guidance of exceptional artists and composers such as Patrick Ourceau, Judy Hyman and Rayna Gellert in the pursuit of these new genres. One of Elena's favourite pastimes is attending jams as she enjoys connecting with other musicians, learning new tunes, meeting new people and learning their stories through music. She is often inspired by people of all ages and stages of life who are fiercely dedicated to their craft and love what they do.

Elena is a trained Suzuki violin instructor and Creative Ability Development coach. She directs the Toronto Suzuki Studio and is a faculty member at the North York Suzuki School of Music. She enjoys teaching music to both children and adults and strongly believe that one is never too old or too late to learn an instrument. Her goal as a teacher is to nurture her students to be their own creative guides. Through their instruments they learn the power of discipline, commitment and to trust and share their voices through their expression, creativity and connection to their community.

Arie Verheul van de Ven - Composition, Klezmer ensemble, violin, viola



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.

Wendy Yuan - cooking



Hi everyone! My name is Wendy, and I am currently studying Cello Performance at McGill University. I am super passionate about cooking, baking, and creating delicious recipes for my family and friends. I am the owner of a small, home-based bakery, specializing in cakes and tarts! I decided to start my business during the quarantine of summer 2020, then stopped when I moved to Montreal for university. My business is thankfully up and running again and I’m super excited to share some of my favourite recipes with all of you! In my spare time, I love to read, discover new music, play piano/cello, go on runs, and of course bake!