

ON BEING A TRAINEE IN CAMBRIDGE

by Catherine Godden

I discovered Jenny Macmillan and Cambridge Suzuki Training in August 2020 during the crazy days of lockdowns. At my first CST workshop, which was for me in California at 3:30 am, I sat mesmerised, watching Caroline Fraser in Peru helping a child in Cambridge produce amazing sounds in Chant Arabe, while being observed by teachers from Finland, Spain and the UK. I knew this was something special that I had to be a part of.

Having been a Suzuki cello teacher in San Diego for many years, I wanted to branch out and teach Suzuki piano. I was incredibly nervous at my first lesson with Jenny on the Twinkles with the other trainees observing, but I received encouragement, specific praise, things to work on, and clear step by step instructions. I knew what to practise, how to practise and why I had to practise it, to develop mastery. I was eager and excited to work hard and improve before the next lesson. A perfect Suzuki lesson!

I passed my Level 1 exam after two years attending CST workshops and am working towards Level 2. Meeting online every month from September through June and now in-person workshops, every trainee on CST rapidly feels part of a supportive community. The trainees collaborate with each other on presentations, give each other ideas for teaching group classes, play pieces to each other for performance practice, give moral support while working to improve in written assignments, and offer specific praise and constructive ways to improve on termly Facebook concerts.

Being a multi-level group also mirrors what we want our own students to learn from observing others. I am inspired by the ease with which some more advanced trainees teach and choose just the right point to work on. I feel privileged to have heard presentations and masterclasses from some amazing teachers; Caroline Gowers, Sue Bird, Graham Rix and Ed Kreitman to name a few. I have even learnt about yoga and tai chi along the way!

I know I will be able to help my pupils become beautiful musicians with beautiful hearts because of the rigorous training I am receiving and the knowledge I am gaining. And that is why I get up at 3.30am for the CST workshop every month! Thanks to all my wonderful fellow trainees and of course to Jenny Macmillan!

