

The European Suzuki Teaching Development Trust supports Suzuki teacher training in South Africa by funding the travel costs of the teacher trainers. We recently received the following short article from a parent member of the South African Suzuki Association.

Letter from South Africa: A few thoughts on the visits of the ESA teacher trainers

by Jennifer Tennant

The biannual visits by the European Suzuki Association teacher trainers may be a highlight of the teachers' year, but they are no less important to the children who get the opportunity to attend workshops or training sessions.

My son Aidan, who is now 10, has had the privilege of attending a couple of the workshops over the past two years. And his enjoyment of the event – the intelligent interaction and the lightness of being that the trainers bring – never diminishes.

While realising that the training is aimed primarily at the South African violin teachers, I think the children too get an enormous amount out of sessions they attend.

I know Aidan looks forward to the chance of interacting with both Karen and Christophe.

He loves Christophe's quirky sense of humour that nonetheless makes telling points during the lesson – and help breaks down any shyness – and the personal way he interacts with each child. And I know that he takes Karen's advice to heart, sometimes finding through her a fresh way of looking at a particular piece or technique.

Their visits to South Africa bring a freshness to familiar terrain.

This December brought a new dimension to the South African training sessions: a morning workshop just for the children run by a new member of the team in South Africa, Koen.

With the exception of a short mid-morning break Aidan and his classmate worked from 9am to about noon. And, at the end of the morning, Aidan was disappointed it had to end.

Together Koen and the boys played musical games, while at the same time learning various techniques, polishing familiar pieces and putting into practise the Suzuki theory on repetition. They also learned some musical history and found a whole new way of listening to, and playing, Humoresque.

Koen even found the time, during a short break, to chat about Suzuki group classes and the different between the sexes – even at the age of 10 – and the need for boys to be more physically involved.

As an onlooker, it is wonderful to watch how all three teacher trainers constantly, and consistently, model what is expected of the children – intellectually, emotionally and physically.

And make no mistake, the children are aware of it too. Aidan always has something to say about the particular teacher's posture or bow hold, about how he can use the information from the class, or how much fun he has had.

At the end of the December workshops Aidan was bubbling with enthusiasm, talking about meeting Christophe, Karen and Koen again next year.

From a parent's perspective: "What more could anyone want?"