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ABOUT SUZUKI is a series of publications dealing with the philosophy of early childhood education developed by Shinichi Suzuki. Beginning with the successful "mother tongue" approach to the teaching of violin and musicianship to very young children, his methodology has been expanded to include cello, viola, string ensemble, piano and flute. The Suzuki emphasis on teaching the whole child in the way most natural to each child has gained worldwide acceptance. Suzuki teachers can be found in every corner of the globe, and educators have become increasingly interested in comparing the Suzuki approach to other pioneering trends in childhood education. "About Suzuki" publications make the exciting and thought-provoking concepts of this international forum equally accessible to educators, parents, students, and the general reader.

SHINICHI SUZUKI was born in 1898 in Nagoya, Japan, the son of a violin manufacturer. Not until the age of seventeen did he receive his first violin instruction. In 1919 he went to Germany in order to study with Karl Klingler in Berlin; in 1928 he returned to his native land. According to his own testimony, he received valuable stimulation from the recordings of Fritz Kreisler, whose tone and articulation he found particularly inspiring. After his return to Japan, Suzuki taught at a conservatory, initially without attracting much attention. During the Second World War he worked in his father's factory, which had been temporarily converted to the production of "sea plane floats." It was at this time that he discovered the learning abilities of very small children and developed his own educational ideas, which he immediately applied in the instruction of preschool children. In 1945 he expanded the small music school in Matsumoto into today's Talent Education School. A seven-minute film featuring a clip from one of his students' concerts made him known in the USA. After some delay European musical educators have also begun to devote attention to Suzuki's methodological ideas.

PREFACE

I would cordially like to thank Professors Steinschaden and Zehetmair for their efforts to systematically classify my educational work and bring it to the attention of the German-speaking world. In addition, I am also pleased with their suggestions in the areas of aural education and music theory.

Yet despite the importance of all didactic analyses, I would like once more to elucidate my main objective. When teaching, instructors should not restrict themselves merely to pure instruction. The reason for beginning with very small children has above all to do with the prodigious learning capability they exhibit at this early age—chiefly from the age of three; but, in addition, it is at this stage that the fundamental values which can provide the child with help and stability throughout life should be imparted. Particularly in the present age, with its confusing environmental conditions characterized by rapid technological and commercial development, we must give the child help and support.

Early training of the powers of concentration and responsiveness should provide one such form of assistance. Another involves encouraging comprehension and internalization, in the sense that learning and practicing are in all fields a regular and lifelong task. Not least, it is also necessary to promote the development of sensibility toward beauty and art. These abilities should accord the child the joy, strength, and self-confidence necessary to actively shape his or her life and future happiness.

It is my wish that all teachers take these aspects just as seriously as they do the constant efforts to provide their students with a good technical education, for there is nothing more precious than the soul of a child. Preserving its purity and strength and protecting it from bad influences should be our common task.

Shinichi Suzuki

FOREWORD

IN the course of the last two decades the violin method of the Japanese Shinichi Suzuki has achieved an unparalleled degree of international recognition, not only among specialists but also among the public at large. Spectacular television appearances of children playing the violin—mass concerts in which several hundred children participate at the same time—and press reports, especially in illustrated magazines, have aroused worldwide interest.

To some music educators Suzuki appeared as a kind of magician who had discovered the “philosophers’ stone” of violin instruction. Nevertheless, his method too, like every other, is merely a “tool” in the hands of the teacher, whose good or poor use of it will determine its success or failure. In this same sense, Shinichi Suzuki is no “wizard” but rather an extremely systematic educator. In addition, he is distinguished by a positive attitude toward children, one sustained by love and understanding. In this sense, the title of his autobiographical work *Nurtured By Love* is to be understood as an educational philosophy; and one could certainly reverse the title to read: “Love by Nurturing.” This might be a cause of friction with representatives of anti-authoritarian educational methods; but the experienced practitioner will know how to find the golden mean.

Whoever desires to work with this method must first of all thoroughly and conscientiously examine its principles in general and the organization of the course in particular. This booklet is designed to acquaint an interested circle of colleagues with the nearly ten years of experience which the authors have had with The Suzuki Method.¹ It can in no way serve as a substitute for the acquisition of the Suzuki books and the adoption of the course of study; it offers merely a methodological commentary on individual aspects. In the process, we aim to stimulate the reader to study thoroughly

the methodological works listed in the bibliography and to recognize the interconnections between the individual instructional texts, in order to be able to offer to each student, as an individual personality, the best possible guidance.

In view of the paramount importance which the initial instruction for beginners has for the later course of development, we have limited ourselves to a discussion of the first book of the violin method.

Even on the elementary level one should strive for quality music-making. By this we mean not only "correct" playing with respect to rhythm, intonation, posture, and motion, but rather, in addition, a graceful, lively, and tasteful musical presentation. Playing by ear without the aid of music creates the opportunity for this.

Finally, teachers should never confine themselves to the role of being only the "violin teacher": they must be "music teachers" across the broad spectrum of musical forms and structures; and, over and above this, must even be model educators in the universal, humanistic sense.

Ambition alone should not be the prime motivation behind learning, but rather joy in music and in the proficient playing of music. In this endeavor teachers, students, and parents form a unified whole. To offer some specialized help in this effort is the purpose and intention of this short work.

July 1981
The Authors

INTRODUCTION

THE appropriate and fruitful use of The Suzuki Method demands a thorough and conscientious examination of the instructional work and its special principles.

Fundamentals of Suzuki's Instructional Work

The Suzuki Method differs from our traditional violin methods in a few essential points:

1. The idea of the "mother-tongue method" (as it is called by Suzuki):

Suzuki observed that children at a very early age develop an astonishing learning capacity in the process of acquiring knowledge of their mother tongue.² His attempts to apply this insight to the violin instruction of young children yielded outstanding results. (In recent years Suzuki has also expanded his school to include piano, flute, viola, and cello.)

As in the process of learning the mother tongue, Suzuki at first dispenses with the reading of notes and therefore with playing from music. After all, the learning of language proceeds in a similar fashion in the sense that from birth the child receives daily a series of linguistic sound impressions. These are stored in the memory and arouse the child's own desire to express itself in terms of language. To do this it needs neither script nor grammar.

If we present the young child with musical sound impressions on a regular basis, then certainly the desire to express itself musically will gradually be awakened. In order to assist this process Suzuki makes cassettes available which contain pieces played in his school. These recordings are an essential and *indispensable* component of the method. Suzuki over and over again points out to teachers and parents that rapid progress and the development of a feeling for music depends on listening daily to the appropriate pieces. On the basis of

previous experiences, a firm warning must be issued against using the method without these recordings! On this point the teacher must be resolute.

2. The idea of combining individual and group instruction:

The development of violin-playing skill takes place in individual instruction. Twice a month all the students (advanced as well as less advanced) assemble for a joint performance in unison of the pieces from the violin lessons. This type of instruction should not be confused with other forms of group instruction. The children play along with Suzuki to the point they have reached in their violin lessons, and then they simply listen to the more advanced students. The children very much enjoy playing in unison, and it encourages a noticeable improvement in their abilities. For the weaker students it offers an opportunity to play "beyond themselves" (to be swept along by the others); more advanced students see their own level of achievement confirmed. The size of the group remains accordingly variable.

3. The principle of repeating pieces already learned:

This is the prerequisite for the group instruction and provides the opportunity by means of repetition to polish violin-playing techniques, to refine musical taste, and to build up a proper repertoire. A steady training of the musical memory goes hand in hand with this. In addition, the violin teacher, by working constantly with a set repertoire of instrumental pieces, develops the necessary degree of experience and proficiency.

4. Tonalization, understood as the principle of constant work on the quality of the violin tone:

The creation of a beautiful tone is a special goal of violin practice (just as beautiful singing is to voice training). The starting point is the sound of the plucked, freely-vibrating open string. From the beginning, scales and triads are practiced with this goal in mind.

In order to properly emphasize the importance of this idea let us reiterate the point that the chief difference between traditional instrumental instruction and Suzuki lies in the latter's dispensing with playing from music during the early training. As disconcerting as this may appear to some, this approach to learning is essential for rapid and secure pro-

gress, since the individual pieces, prior to being played, must be firmly anchored in the mind (“in the ear”) through repeated listening to the appropriate recordings. From the very outset, the children play by ear; consequently, hearing assumes clear priority over sight (in contrast to written notation in traditional instrumental instruction). By omitting the reading of music—which always poses great difficulties for the beginner—the students can concentrate on the actual musical process, on sound and motion. Gypsies and folk musicians passed on their musical heritage and instrumental skill in precisely this way. That this approach can be justified didactically can be seen in C.A. Martienssen’s book *Creative Piano Instruction* (*Schöpferischer Klavierunterricht*); drawing on the example of the educational techniques of Leopold Mozart, the author illustrates the general musical principles involved in the training of the child prodigy Wolfgang Amadeus.³

The “creative musical urge,” the desire to express oneself in musical sounds, is the indispensable precondition for a successful and meaningful instrumental instruction. This desire emerges as a consequence of musical impressions and experiences. It is especially reinforced in the children taught by Suzuki by requiring that, at first, the mother also learn the fundamentals of playing the violin, while the child for a short time does nothing but listen and observe. Suzuki has arranged his instructional program into ten volumes, each of which comes with a booklet containing the piano accompaniment and a corresponding record or cassette. The success of this method depends not only on the indispensable use of the recordings, but also on the incorporation of the piano accompaniment into the group sessions. The piano accompaniment facilitates and aids the orientation of the student with regard to intonation, tempo, dynamics, and phrasing. When a piano accompaniment is not possible due to organizational reasons, one may employ a recording, as is occasionally done by teachers at the Central Institute for The Suzuki Method in Matsumoto.

PRACTICAL METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTARY ON SUZUKI VIOLIN VOLUME ONE

IN the introduction to the first book Suzuki presents in brief form the principles of his program as outlined above. Then the fundamentals of playing the violin are elaborated.

Posture and Holding the Violin

Body posture and the holding of the violin are stipulated according to this "guideline": nose-strings-elbow-left foot; they should be aligned vertically in a straight line (See *Figure 1*). This position produces a satisfactory result for most children. In a proper stance, the left foot of the violin-playing

Figure 1

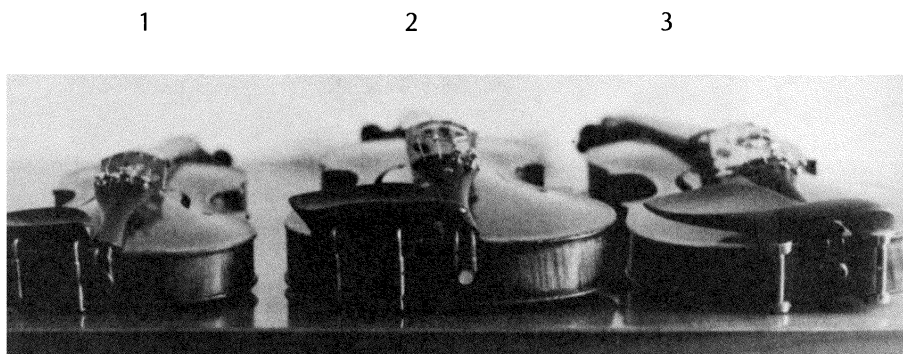


The Appropriate Violin

The violin is the right size if the child can clasp the scroll with the left hand while assuming the proper stance and holding the violin in the recommended fashion. In clasping the scroll the left arm should not be forcefully extended but should rather remain slightly flexed. In any case, the use of an instrument which is too large is to be strongly discouraged: stretching the left arm will rapidly lead to fatigue on the student's part. In addition, the rather sharp angle between the violin neck and the palm of the hand can induce the pupil to place the ball of the thumb against the violin. As a result of the altered "geometry,"⁷ even bowing problems can arise. Small instruments of this kind require careful adjustment by the violin maker: the right height and curvature of the bridge, the functioning of the tuning pegs, and the size of the violin all need to be checked!

The use of steel strings connected to four tuners (tuner tailpiece) is advisable. Low chin rests, which should be attached to the left of the tailpiece, are best for preschool age children (1). Chin rests which span the tailpiece (2 and 3) generally prove to be too high (See *Figure 10*).

Figure 10



Shoulder supports are not necessary at this age; to prevent the violin from slipping, a piece of foam, $\frac{3}{8}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inches thick and about the size of the palm of the hand, can be at-