



## An Introduction to the Suzuki Method

Shinichi Suzuki, a violinist and teacher, carried his lifelong interest and sympathy for children into post-war Japan. Encouraged by their ability to assimilate the mother-tongue [without reading it first], he saw a great opportunity to enrich children's lives through music. His primary goal was never to teach young people only how to play musical instruments. Rather, he championed the unique contribution music can make in the total learning process.

- **Dr. Suzuki believed that talent is not an accident of birth, but that the potential of every child can be highly developed if he or she is given the proper training and learning environment.** Because Suzuki was himself a violinist, he applied his theories first in teaching very young children to play the violin. The Suzuki Method now includes piano, cello, flute, viola, violin, harp and more. Each instrument has its own repertoire, but the basic teaching techniques and the philosophy that "every child can learn" are the same.
- **Talent Education** (the name Dr. Suzuki gave his philosophy of teaching) **usually begins at an early age.** Dr. Suzuki suggested that parents repeatedly play recordings of classical music for their infants and toddlers. Actual music lessons ideally begin around age three or four, **but it is never too late** to begin the Suzuki Method.
- **Talent education combines listening, practicing and performing -- all under the careful supervision of parent and teacher.** Private lessons are held weekly. **The Suzuki parent is actively involved in the learning process.** The parent attends all lessons and practices with the student each day, making sure the student does exactly as the teacher instructed. Younger students, whose attention spans are short, may have several brief practices each day, instead of one long practice. **The parent encourages the child, giving praise for each effort, so that practice time is a positive experience.** The length of practice time gradually increases as the student advances through the repertoire. The parent need not be a musician - he/she is taught step by step how to help the child at home.
- **Students are encouraged to quietly observe the private lessons of other students.** Much can be learned and reinforced through observation -- often it is easier to understand one's own problem when seen in others. This also provides the observed student the opportunity to play before a small audience, and may improve the quality of the lesson.
- **Every student MUST listen each day to a recording of the piece he is learning.** In the Suzuki Method, the child begins playing simple pieces before he is taught to read music. He learns to depend on his ear for the proper pitch and tone. He acquires skill and confidence in

his playing ability before he is asked to begin "official" note reading. Until note reading begins, the parent follows the music and teaches the correct fingering and technique as instructed by the teacher.

- **All Suzuki compositions are memorized (played by ear).** Repeated listening to the "Suzuki pieces" simplifies this process, as music quickly goes from the ear to the fingers of the student. Only after a piece is memorized can the teacher truly concentrate on proper technique and musicality.
- **At first, students follow the same sequence of materials.** Each instrument has its own repertoire. Starting with Volume 1, the child masters each composition, moving carefully forward, acquiring new skills with each piece -- each piece preparing the student for the one to follow.
- **Review is an important aspect of the Suzuki Method.** The student spends part of each practice session reviewing "old" pieces. Here **he applies new skills and techniques to pieces he already knows** -- now he hears for himself the progress he has made.
- **When possible, group lessons are held as well** -- students have the pleasure of playing together and for one another. Younger students hear the pieces of older students and are inspired to work harder in order to play those pieces. **With a spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm, the students and parents encourage each other.**
- **Students must have frequent opportunities for solos at informal recitals.** At this time, each child shows what he has accomplished and has the opportunity to learn from the performances of other students. Parents are encouraged to schedule home recitals so that both parents, not just the one working daily with the child, shares in his progress and motivate him to practice more. Frequent opportunities to play before an audience increase the student's self-confidence and he enjoys, rather than fears, playing before others.
- **Talent Education not only provides the child with an enriching musical experience but also creates an atmosphere of sharing and mutual learning which can bond parent and child in a unique and rewarding manner.**
- **Creating professional musicians was not the goal of Shinichi Suzuki.** He believed that through the medium of music, with the proper environment and educational process, sensitivity and understanding may be encouraged in children, creating for each child a better life -- and for us all, a better world.

