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ABOUT SUZUKI is a series of publications dealing with the philosophy of early childhood education developed by Shin-ichi 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.

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PREFACE

A quarter of a century has passed since this material was first presented as a report to the Bok and Presser Foundations. Subsequently, the story of Suzuki and his ideas has been written and re-written countless times, in many languages.

In the interest of historicity, the text of the original report has been left largely unchanged in the present publication, but an epilogue has been added to give more up-to-date information, and a complete publication list plus a selected bibliography, have been added.

It is felt by the writer that the essential principles and concepts outlined in this booklet have withstood the test of time, and have achieved wide acceptance, although there is still a certain amount of controversy and criticism of some aspects of the Talent Education movement.

The dangers of "cultism" and narrow, dogmatic interpretations of the pedagogical approach have not disappeared, but the major thrust of the movement, and the constant efforts to improve teaching skills and parent understanding, must inevitably raise the standards and produce positive results.

INTRODUCTION

THERE are moments in history when a place, a time, a man and an idea converge to produce results of great significance. Such a moment occurred when Shinichi Suzuki began his experiments in violin teaching in Japan. The results have attracted widespread attention, and have generated much speculation about the nature of musical learning and the way in which every human being develops in the early formative years. It is not that any particular segment of Suzuki's ideas is new, but rather that the totality of his concepts, together with the results he has shown, throw a clear light on a question we all wish to explore—how do human beings become musical?

In March 1965 at the MENC biennial convention in Philadelphia a crowd of music educators assembled for a demonstration by Shinichi Suzuki and ten Japanese children aged five to thirteen. Many of those present had come to the meeting with skepticism or from mere curiosity. Few, if any, left without being deeply impressed by what they saw and heard. These children played long works from memory with beauty of tone and sound musicianship. They demonstrated their flexibility by moving around the stage and up and down steps while playing. Suzuki divided the children into two groups to play the Vivaldi *Concerto in a minor*. Group 1 played until he clapped his hands whereupon Group 2 took over without a break in the music. Back and forth from one group to the other, the Vivaldi was played without hesitation and with evenness and security. Suzuki selected difficult spots at which to give the signal. Obviously these children knew the concerto thoroughly. The climax of the demonstration was reached with a masterful performance of the Chausson *Poeme* played by thirteen-year-old Yukari Tate. Certainly this Japanese music educator had proven himself a great teacher.

American interest in Suzuki can be traced back from his 1964 visit several years to the Spring of 1958 when, during a regional meeting of the American String Teachers Association at Oberlin College in Ohio, a group of string specialists incredulously watched and listened to a motion picture of 750 Japanese children playing the Bach *Concerto for Two Violins* at the Sports Palace in Tokyo. The phenomenal results achieved by these youngsters aroused a great deal of interest, enthusiasm, and discussion. At that time it seemed obvious that some American teacher should make the trip to Japan and observe firsthand the teaching methods used with these children. (Actually, Joseph Szigeti, several years earlier, had heard the children, and impressed by their performance, had submitted an article to *The New York Times*, which did not publish it.) With this in mind, correspondence was carried on with Suzuki. His cordial invitation for me to visit made possible a six weeks' trip to Japan in the summer of 1959, for observation and study. A subsequent trip was made in March, April, and May of 1962.

During these visits, through the wonderful cooperation of Mr. Suzuki and the teachers and parents of Talent Education, excellent opportunities were afforded to hear Japanese students of ages ranging from 3 to 17 years, singly and in groups. These experiences convinced me of several things: *first*, that this method, after sixteen years of experiment in Japan, has achieved amazing results; *second*, that three-year-old children are not too young to learn to play the violin; *third*, that we are wasting several years of good "learning time" in America by waiting until age nine or ten before beginning violin instruction; *fourth*, that rote, or memory teaching of violin may be extended to two or even three years without in any way interfering with the child's later abilities to read music; *fifth*, that competition is not necessarily the strongest motivation for progress in learning, and that love of music for its own sake, together with a continual encouragement to self-development, can be powerful motives for students; and *finally*, that we should certainly experiment in America with the teaching methods and ideas which have been so successful in Japan.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TALENT EDUCATION MOVEMENT

STIRRED deeply by the suffering and privation of Japanese children as an aftermath of World War II, Shinichi Suzuki, like countless others, was led to consider ways in which he might contribute to the renewal of hope and courage. He was a musician whose European training included eight years of study with Karl Klingler of Berlin and who had had pre-war experience as both performer and teacher in Japan. As he himself convalesced from a serious illness, he resolved to devote his life to the youngsters of Japan who so much needed attention and an opportunity for creative activity. In Matsumoto where he began there were no violins available. Undaunted, he had his first students share a single violin, taking it from home to home for practice.

A few years later, he had interested many parents and other teachers in his idea for teaching violin to the very young. He had published the first of his manuals with recordings and violins of all sizes soon became available. "Saino-Kyoiku" or Talent Education, as he called it, was established.

In 1966 there were one hundred twenty teachers and six thousand students in about fifty different centers throughout Japan. Although the Talent Education movement itself is carried on outside the schools, many of the pupils do participate in school music programs. A number of brilliant performers have come from Mr. Suzuki's training. He insists, however, that the primary purpose of Talent Education is not to train professionals, but to give all children the opportunity to develop their amazing potential.

In 1954 an annual "National Festival" concert was inaugurated in which some 1,500 students from all over Japan play together in the Tokyo Sports Palace before thousands of parents and interested spectators. Each summer since 1949, teachers, parents, and pupils have gathered together at Matsumoto to attend a week of playing together, giving concerts,

THE RELEVANCE FOR AMERICAN TEACHERS

AMERICANS who heard the Japanese children in Philadelphia or in other concerts presented during that 1964 tour cannot doubt the success of Suzuki's efforts with these students. But many are bound to observe that Japanese society is organized differently from our own with different values, including strong family traditions of courtesy, patience, and veneration of one's elders. Japanese schools differ markedly from American schools. How, then, can Suzuki's ideas be applied to the American public school music program? What can the private teacher in this country use of Suzuki's methods?

Answers to these questions are still being formulated. There may not be any one single pattern which will serve equally well in all schools or for all teachers.

Homogeneous classes

It would appear that Talent Education ideas may be used successfully and at various age levels in homogeneous violin classes. It seems doubtful that they should be attempted in the mixed string and wind classes sometimes found in American schools. Certainly Suzuki's methods will not cure the ills that beset some instrumental programs—too little class time, poor equipment, teachers not prepared as string instructors. American violin classes, however, may well profit from the adoption of such ideas as eliminating chairs, music stands, and printed music and concentrating on listening and playing.

Heterogeneous string classes

One of the strongest existing patterns for string teaching in American public schools is the string class in which violins, violas, celli, and basses are taught together. In view of this, it is inevitable that experimentation with Suzuki's ideas should