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BIRTHDAYS OF COMPOSERS AND PERFORMERS

INTRODUCTION

Many students presently study violin and viola via the Suzuki approach. These students generally have weekly individual lessons on their instruments, and the relationship between the Suzuki student, parent, and teacher is often described as a triangle.

Three additional aspects of learning via the Suzuki approach form another triangle:

home practice

individual lesson

group lesson

Suzuki students are pooled together into a wide variety of group repertory and music reading lessons. Some lessons include only students of like ages and ability levels; others merge students of many levels. A teacher may be asked to work with a small or a huge number of students at one time. The availability and expertise of assisting parents, teachers and piano accompanists varies as much as the teaching situations.

Group lessons also vary in their long- or short-term duration. Some groups of students will receive instruction from the same teacher regularly for a long time, while other groups are created only for a specific workshop or institute. Primary purposes for group instruction include: ensemble, inspiration, polishing, and performance. Group lessons motivate both students and parents and are a good source of social interaction and support.

Playing fundamentals and the students' growing repertoires and musical awareness form the basis of group lesson content. The students build their technique with pieces they can play. An important part of each student's review is the musicality he can bring to his pieces. The group lesson provides an opportunity to absorb new and different but still acceptable musical ideas.

This book is a compilation of violin and viola repertory group lesson ideas from many sources, planned to reinforce what is learned at individual lessons and at home. These ideas are based on the premise that no one but the accompanist uses sheet music during the lesson. The book is organized according to students' ability levels, pre-*Twinkle* through Book 4. Each chapter contains an introduction, suggested warm-up activities, and appropriate ideas for working toward the following general goals:

(Note: this does not represent the order of a lesson)

- posture
- concentration and coordination
- right hand techniques (including tone)
- left hand techniques
- musicality

Activities for combined violin and viola groups, possible central themes, and suggestions for the end of the group lesson wrap up each section of the book.

CHAPTER ONE: PRE-TWINKLE

INTRODUCTION

Parents are vital pre-Twinkle group lesson participants. As long as the children are in the lesson room, they will be absorbing lesson ideas. If a student cannot handle being a part of the group, he should sit quietly on the “sidelines” with his parent. With variety in their group lesson, many pre-Twinklers can last for a 45-minute session.

One basic pre-Twinkle group set-up is made by marking out a circle of masking tape spots in the center of the room. Each student chooses a piece of masking tape to sit on, and his parent sits behind him. For safety’s sake, (pre-)instruments and bows should be kept in their open cases, within easy reach. It is a nice touch to have a recording of Book One softly playing in the background before the lesson begins. Always begin the lesson on time; this will encourage punctuality the next time.

Along with any necessary name introductions, a sentence or two to each of the students noticing something special (such as their apparel) makes them feel more comfortable. Admire new cases and instruments. Keep announcement-making to the absolute minimum. The students are psyched up to start learning, and this momentum should not be lost.

Many teachers begin and end each lesson with a respectful bow. The teacher bows to the class, and the class bows together to the teacher.

POSTURE

1. Feet

Pre-Twinkle posture-learning begins with the feet. If the students have not already received *foot-charts* (or something with proper foot placement marked on it), make charts on file folders or pizza circles at the first group session:

