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## **Editor's Comment**

Teachers and parents who are involved in Suzuki violin programs may notice that certain teaching procedures recounted in this book are different from those they use. Such variations, frequently regional, need not be cause for concern. Suzuki pedagogy continues to evolve as teachers find more effective ways of presenting material and motivating young children.

## Foreword

What is it like to be a Suzuki parent?

Most parents of Suzuki students discover that they go through stages. For awhile, they harbor their doubts and frustrations in secret, fearing that they are the only ones that are not able to make the system work as well as they believe it should. Then, through meeting with other parents, they learn to their amazement and relief that everyone experiences rough spots in the road. They discover solutions to the problems they encounter, and with those solutions, the joy of being a Suzuki parent.

Carroll Morris, with her humorous style, recounts the consternation, the work, and the thrill of that first year as a novice Suzuki parent. Through anecdotes, she reveals her innermost thoughts and feelings in a delightful light-hearted style.

For parents considering the Suzuki approach for their children, this book will chart a course of expectations. No lecture or textbook could convey more effectively to parents a sense of what being “in Suzuki” involves.

For an experienced parent, the book will serve as a reminder of those poignant events in their life that were similar. Laughter comes more easily now.

For all, the book is a well disguised précis of child rearing and child psychology as incorporated in those first years of the Suzuki “experience.”

The Suzuki method, as with life itself, is not a thing or a status—it is a journey. I hope that the reader finds Mrs. Morris’ account of that first year’s journey as pleasurable as I did.

Lorraine Fink  
October 1984

## Introduction

20 years later . . .

When I wrote *A Suzuki Parent's Diary*, three of my children were participating in the Wayzata, Minnesota school district's Suzuki String Program. The program was run by Helen Loing, a gifted instructor in the Suzuki Method, in partnership with Barbara Lamb, a district orchestra teacher and also a Suzuki instructor. The Suzuki String Program produced many well-trained elementary string players and contributed significantly to the fine junior-high and high school orchestras in the district.

My daughter Mattie, a busy young woman who now plays the violin occasionally, wrote the following about the value of her Suzuki training with Mrs. Loing:

What I got out of Suzuki Violin:

- An appreciation of classical music
- A trained ear, invaluable in musical endeavors
- The ability to easily memorize and retain information
- Confidence when performing or speaking in public
- Persistence—any kind of skill improves with practice!
- Pride in achievement
- The opportunity to travel

When I was in 4th grade, I was a member of the Suzuki String Players from the Wayzata Elementary Schools that toured the area around Toronto, Canada. We drew an audience wherever we performed—a group of youngsters playing well does attract attention!

This was especially the case when we performed at the largest shopping mall in Canada. After the performance, the events manager told us that of all the different groups he had booked, including rock bands, ours had had the best response! Shoppers stopped to listen and many stayed through the entire performance. That was a triumph for me as a kid and it showed the joy and inspiration that a group of young Suzuki string players can provide for those in the audience.

My other children mentioned similar benefits, and I suspect that anyone with Suzuki training would agree. The Suzuki method is as much training for life as it is training in how to play an instrument.

*A Suzuki Parent's Diary* is a work of fiction, but it accurately reflects the ups and downs of having a child in Suzuki string training. If you are a parent just starting out on this great adventure, I hope it will give you information, insight and inspiration when you need it most. And a laugh or two, as well.

Carroll Morris  
May 2005

## Preface

A few months ago, a woman called me for information about Suzuki violin. Poor lady. The information she wanted could have been given in three minutes, but I turned on my “Suzuki is marvelous” tape, and let her have it—beginning to end.

That night, I had a horrible dream. An imposing figure dressed in white and carrying a transparent violin approached me. Waving his crystal bow at me, he asked menacingly, “Do you remember what you said just one year ago today about ‘Suzuki mothers?’”

Quickly, I did a re-run back to last year. When I realized what he was referring to, I nodded reluctantly.

“Well, what did you say?”

“I said that all Suzuki mothers sound like a recording of *The Wonderful World of Suzuki*.”

“And how did you sound today?” The eyes were penetrating. There was no escape.

I lowered my eyes and mumbled, “Exactly the same.”

The figure waved the golden-haired bow and out of nowhere appeared a ream of paper. “In penance, you shall now write the truth about your first year’s experience as a Suzuki mother. The *whole* truth!”

“The whole truth?” I asked doubtfully.

He didn’t answer, but he really didn’t need to. I got the message. He was gone with the morning light, like all midnight apparitions, but I couldn’t forget his injunction.

So I did it. Here it is in black and white and blood red. May it help when the E string breaks, the sponge and rubber bands disappear, your child develops sudden-onset arthritis of the fingers and you wonder, “Why am I doing this anyway?”

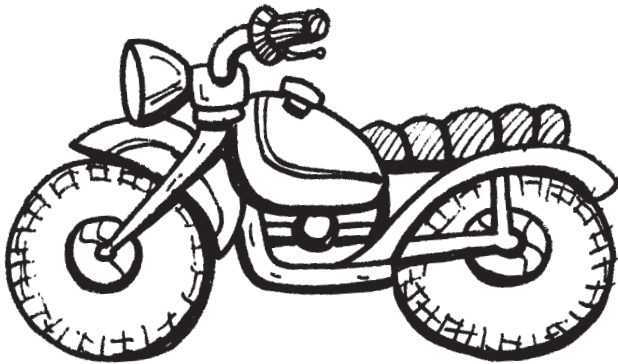
## The Invitation

September 4

This afternoon, my first-grade daughter Carrie brought home an information sheet about Suzuki violin. I confess to being confused. I thought Suzuki made motorcycles, not music.

Oh, wait. Now I get it. Dr. Suzuki is the guy with the little violinists. I saw his picture once in *Time Magazine*.

If I remember correctly, his students don't learn to read notes. Sounds suspiciously like the "Think Method" used by Professor Harold Hill in the *Music Man!*



"Suzuki?"

## **There's Going to be a Concert!**

**November 21**

There's going to be a concert! Carrie's excited even though she'll just be playing *Twinkle Tune* and *Lightly Row*. We went to a play-through tonight and the concert will be tomorrow night.

The play-through was just what it sounds like: a rehearsal of the numbers to be performed at the concert. Let me tell you, it was quite a process. First Mrs. Wirth and Ms. Strang grouped the kids together according to their most difficult concert piece. Then they showed the kids the rows they were to stand in. (Mrs. Wirth had already marked the rows with masking tape and individual name cards for each child. Can you imagine how much time it took to set this up?) Once the kids were in place, the two instructors and mothers of advanced students helped them tune their violins. All this had to take place before the actual play-through could even begin.

Carrie says that playing in such a large group is a lot different from playing alone, because she can't hear herself as well when surrounded by other violinists. She's also not used to playing the songs with piano accompaniment, although I've accompanied her a few times in our practices. She had some difficulty with concert etiquette, too—keeping her attention on Mrs. Wirth, listening for the introduction to her songs, and bowing to the audience on cue.

Again, Carrie's biggest difficulty was keeping up with the tempo. We've been working on getting her pieces up to speed, but she doesn't like playing with the repertoire tape, and when I accompany her on the piano, I tend to slow down to match her pace. When I mentioned this to another Suzuki parent, she suggested having Carrie play along with the accompaniment tape. (Yet another resource!) Her little boy has been playing with it a lot, and he had no trouble with the tempo during the play-in.