

Contents

What Is Man's Ultimate Direction in Life?	3	The SSSMT Method	73
Dedication	4	O Come Little Children	75
Acknowledgments	5	Suzuki and Vivaldi	77
Introduction	6	Perpetual Motion	78
About the Author	8	The Silent Pupil	79
Ave Maria	11	Variations and Theme	81
Matsumoto	13	Dear Family and Friends No. 1	83
My First Visit to Japan	15	Missionary Violinists	86
The Sukiyaki Method	19	My Four Best Pupils	88
Project Super	20	Suzuki and the Egg	90
Suzuki in Rochester	22	I Too Hate Suzuki	93
Talent Education	23	Dear Family and Friends No. 2	95
One Teacher Only!	25	Suzuki in Berlin	97
Crossing the River	30	The Suzuki Vibrato Method	100
Suzuki in Westmount	32	Suzuki and Kreisler	104
The Two Suzukis	35	Minuet No. 1	106
Allegro	38	Trivia	107
Suzuki and English	39	Suzuki Gimmicks	108
Suzuki in Saratoga Springs	40	Music Competitions	112
Suzuki in Person	41	Dear Family and Friends No. 3	116
The Suzuki Notebook	49	Suzuki in South America	118
The Suzuki Stone Bag	51	Song of the Wind	132
Suzuki in Tokyo	54	Suzuki in Morocco	133
Suzuki in Russia	55	Dear Family and Friends No. 4	137
Scales and Studies	58	Suzuki History in the U.S.	139
Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star	60	More Trivia	140
The Gypsy Violinist	62	Suzuki History in Canada	141
Suzuki at McGill University	64	Still More Trivia	143
Suzuki and Jack Benny	66	Everybody Down Up	144
Suzuki in St. Lambert	67	A Suzuki Dictionary	146
The Arrogant Violist	68	Sayonara!	164
The Two Grenadiers	70	Bibliography	165
I Hate Suzuki	71		

What is man's ultimate direction in life?



IT IS TO LOOK FOR LOVE, TRUTH, VIRTUE AND BEAUTY

Nurtured by Love

Shinichi Suzuki



Photo: Arthur Montzka

Dedication



his book is dedicated to Waltraud Suzuki,
with love, admiration and respect.



Waltraud Suzuki and me in 1990

Acknowledgments



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Cover photo: Arthur Montzka

INTRODUCTION



I have been telling Suzuki stories since 1965, but never in the presence of the Suzukis. If you did not know Suzuki, he was a very colorful, completely unpredictable character with a unique sense of humor. With such attributes, it was only natural that some highly comical situations ensued. I found his remarks on such occasions quite hilarious. His remarks in those kinds of situations are what make up most of my Suzuki stories.

Not until 1984 did the Suzukis hear some of my stories for the first time. It happened quite by accident. Suzuki was being honored one night by the University of Wisconsin in Stevens Point. Close to the end of the evening, Margery Aber turned toward me and said, "Alfred, why don't you come and tell us some of your Suzuki stories now?"

I was trapped since both Shinichi and Waltraud Suzuki were present. Anyway, I started to tell some of my stories, and the more stories I told, the more people laughed.

After half a dozen or so stories, Suzuki got up, ran across the floor toward me, took both of my hands in his hands, looked up at me and said, "Would you now say something about education?"

I complied.

The reason for this unexpected request was because after 1980, his greatest interest was in promoting the adaptation of his method to education. He felt that the music method was going well, but the adaptation to the field of education at the elementary school level was not getting off the ground except, according to him, for my ten-year experiment at this level, with which he was familiar.

Once the formalities were over, he said to me, "You know something? You talk too much and you do not write enough, but I have a solution. In the

future, I am going to carry a tape recorder around with me and every time you open your mouth, I am going to stick a microphone in front of you. I only wish that I had had a tape recorder tonight."

Waltraud, who is not given to compliments, said to me, "Alfred, I know that you love, admire and respect Suzuki, but at least you do not treat him like a god. I wish you would publish your stories because you have given him flesh and blood and portray him as a human being for the first time."

More than anything else, Waltraud's remarks were what prompted me to write this book, apart from Suzuki's threat to chase after me with a microphone. At the same time, I could not think of anyone more appropriate than Waltraud to whom I could dedicate this book. Not only is it of a very personal

nature, but too she had known Suzuki as a human being for more than 70 years.

Things were not always easy for Waltraud, and I am not just referring to the war years because those were inevitable. I am referring to the many difficulties that arose over the years as a result of having had to live with a great man whose generosity knew no bounds and who was highly controversial, a living paradox and, in short, a genius. It was an experience that for her proved at times to be as frustrating as it could be rewarding.

In *My Life With Suzuki*, she wrote the following:

And I try to protect him from people, who want to gain financially by his name or otherwise to boost their own egos. It is really sad, that there are always individuals who want to take advantage of him.

Nevertheless, I have seldom come across a more enduring, compatible and fulfilling marriage. The absence of children seems to have drawn them closer



Photo: Arthur Montaka

"Would you now say something about education?" (Suzuki and me)

together, enhanced their love as well as their respect for one another. I well remember her instructions whenever she left him in my care in order to visit her family in Germany or San Francisco. These instructions were to make sure that he had three meals a day and, most important, that he got to bed by ten o'clock every night.

There were many times that I know I would not have won a popularity contest in order to comply with her wishes, particularly after dragging him away from dinner parties and receptions. As they begged him to please stay a little longer, he would point at me and say, "If he says I must go to bed now, then I must go."

I always suspected that secretly he was glad to be able to use me as an excuse.

That was that.

I saw Suzuki for the last time in the summer of 1996. He was then a little hard of hearing and walked very slowly, but his mind was still razor-sharp.

I was with my nephew Dominic Steverlynck, who lives in Yokohama and speaks, writes and reads Japanese fluently. Like so many others, he looked upon his encounter with Suzuki as one of the greatest events of his life.

We spent several hours with the Suzukis joking, laughing and reminiscing. That night, Dominic was so entranced and charged up that he could not go to sleep. He took off and drove to the top of Mount Ogato, where he sat and gazed at the stars until sunrise.

In the meantime, I was fast asleep in Nunoya Ryokan, where I always stay when I am in Matsumoto.

After I got to know Suzuki a little better, he said to me, "I am not only going to train you to teach my method, but I am also going to teach you my philosophy and my way of life."

Thus, over the years, he became like a father to me. He taught me to be patient, never to get angry, never to bear any malice or resentment, never to feel envy, never to covet and never to save any money!

He believed that money was made to be spent and best spent on children's education. Furthermore, he believed that the reason for governments having to print money every day was because people saved it and hid it and that was wrong. As can be imagined, money trickled through his fingers like water and it burned holes in all of his pockets.

When *Nurtured by Love* first appeared, there was very little in the book that was new to me. Suzuki had already narrated most of the contents, although his narratives were not always exactly the same as in the book, but this is of little consequence.

What I have written in this book is exactly as Suzuki told me and situations exactly as they occurred. The teaching points are based on my notes, dating back to the '60s and '70s. I have clarified his language in some of our conversations because, when alone together, we conversed in a mixture of English, Japanese and German.

Furthermore, there is very little in this book that Suzuki had not seen before he passed away. I had either told him the stories in private or else sent him copies as I completed the different chapters.

In conclusion, I have no doubt that Suzuki will go down in history as one of the greatest educators of this century, with the likes of Montessori, Piaget, Penfield, Bruner, Orff and Kodaly.

His absence will undoubtedly leave a great gap in most of our lives, especially in the life of Waltraud.

The day of their 50th wedding anniversary, Suzuki turned round to Waltraud and said, "Don't worry. The next 50 will be better."

They were.



*Dominic Steverlynck and me
with the Suzukis in 1996*

*Dr. Alfred Garson
Conservatory of Music
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
December 1998*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



was born in Berthierville, near Montreal, in Quebec, Canada.

I spent the first five years of my life in Cuba, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Argentina and Norway.

From the age of two, my mother taught me to read, to do simple arithmetic, to play the piano and to read music and music theory.

I entered kindergarten at the age of five but was expelled two weeks later for creating havoc. I objected to being put in a corner to read books while the rest of the class was being taught the alphabet.

At the age of six, I gave my "farewell" piano recital, which included some of my own compositions on Oslo Radio in Norway. I then started to learn the violin with Tivadar Nachez, Jr., and at the same time entered elementary school. I lasted there for three months before being expelled. The problem was I was too far ahead of the rest of the class.

After that, I was given a private tutor for a couple of months each year, in order to complete my schooling for that particular year. I spent the rest of the time practicing the violin, reading books and painting until the end of my elementary school years.

When I was twelve years old, I toured parts of America, Europe, Central America and South America. I played most of the major concertos, sonatas and dozens of recital pieces. The conductors I most liked to play with included Ataulfo Argenta, Albert Coates and Hans Rosbaud.

At the age of sixteen, I was ski jumping in Norway. I had a bad fall and broke my left arm. This ended all aspirations of ever becoming a concert violinist.

Sometime later, I was exercising a racehorse when the horse suddenly got a fright and stopped dead.

I did not stop but sailed over the horse, hit a wooden fence and dislocated my right shoulder.

During World War II, I was conscripted into the Norwegian Underground for an assignment in Germany because of my fluency in five languages at that time. I was arrested by the Gestapo in Berlin, questioned and eventually released, probably because I was quite young. At a later stage, I was arrested again by the Gestapo in Munich. I was questioned and then put under detention but managed to escape to Italy.

In Genoa, I gave a recital in the palace of my hostess, the Baroness Carmen Bogiano Pico, up on Corso Magenta.

From Genoa, I crossed to Barcelona in a fishing boat. I then made my way to Lisbon, where I was debriefed at the British Embassy. In Lisbon, I gave a recital in the Hotel Aviz, where my granduncle, the Baron Wedel Jarlsberg, a one-time Prime Minister of Norway, had retired.

After a couple of months in Lisbon, I bribed an official to get a berth on a Portuguese cargo ship called the João Belo, but I had to sleep on deck. The boat was bound for Cape Town. My parents were domiciled in Nkana, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia),

where my father was a mining engineer. This was my final destination.

Just out of Lisbon, a German submarine stopped the boat. All the passengers were ordered on deck with lifejackets and passports. The German captain and a couple of subordinates boarded the ship and started to inspect the passports. When he came to my passport, he pulled me out of line and out of earshot and began to question me in German. He



Leal and me at three years of age in Chile

wanted to know what I had been doing in Germany all that time. I took a calculated risk and told him that I had been studying the violin privately and giving concerts for the German Forces. The captain smiled and told me to jump boat before reaching Cape Town because the boat was destined to be torpedoed outside of Cape Town.

After the Germans left, I told the Portuguese captain what the German captain had told me. The Portuguese captain just laughed and said that that was only wishful thinking since they hugged the coast, sneaked in and out of ports at night and always tried to remain in territorial waters. Therefore, there was no risk of being torpedoed.

Nevertheless, I decided not to take any chances and jumped boat in Luanda, Angola. From there I caught the freight train to my home in Nkana, via Matadi, Kinshasa, Mbandaka, Kisangani and Lubumbashi in Zaire. Since there was no dining car on the train, it had to stop each evening. The locomotive driver and his assistant would then get their guns and, accompanied by the two African stokers, go out to hunt. The four passengers just sat around, waiting for the hunting party to return. They usually came back with a small deer, which was then roasted on a spit by the two Africans. Water was scarce and often nonexistent, but there were several crates of beer handy. It was not unusual for the passengers to wash in beer!

About a month after reaching home, I read in the newspaper that the João Belo had been torpedoed outside of Cape Town.

There were no survivors.

After three years of high school in Cape Town, without getting expelled, I entered the University of Cape Town. I studied and taught at the university,



With my wife in Manila

where I was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship, a Beit Scholarship, a von Essche Scholarship, the Myers Levinssohn Prize and an SABC Prize for composition.

At this time I was doing a lot of conducting and composing background music for radio plays for the SABC and the BBC. I also wrote incidental music for several documentaries

and Hollywood films, besides having a number of radio plays for children broadcast over the SABC and the BBC. I was also appointed Orchestrator and Arranger for the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. I also played the violin or viola as an extra with the CTMO.

Being a Rhodes Scholar, I was invited as an Ethnomusicologist by the Rhodes Livingstone Foundation, headquartered in Livingstone, Victoria Falls, to research African Music and to collect indigenous instruments and tribal heirlooms. To this end, I spent one year on safari in Zaire, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia, where I recorded African music and collected instruments and tribal heirlooms. During that year, I also survived a bout of malaria and tropical dysentery. The last month was spent completing the dioramas, classifying the instruments and arranging the tribal heirlooms for exhibition in Livingstone Museum.

On my return to South Africa, I started to make speeches at African rallies and meetings. My topic was always the same: urging all Africans to forget their tribal feuds, to stop killing one another and to unite.

I was one of the guest speakers on "Mosheso" Day at Langa Township, where I spoke to more than 5,000 Africans, on the same old subject. The South African police were also there and recorded my speech.

The following day, I was asked to leave South Africa.

I spent the next seven years in Oxford and London before returning to Montreal in Canada.

One summer holiday was spent in Munich studying the Orff Method under Carl Orff himself. At Oxford I studied with Sir

Jack Westrup and in London, with Matyas Seiber, to whom I was introduced by Benjamin Britten. I also taught, played the violin or the viola with orchestras as an extra and wrote music for TV and radio plays.

Once back in Montreal, I started to teach the violin at McGill University. Since my return, I have never played with an orchestra again because as a member of the British Musicians Union, I am not allowed to join the American Musicians Union despite being a Canadian citizen. At that time, I was also appointed Educational Consultant to the Department of Education in Quebec.

I have since retired from the educational field but continue teaching at McGill University.

I have a Ph.D. and two master's degrees in music. I have bachelor's degrees in music, English, psychology and anthropology and an honor's degree in Spanish.

In England, I obtained an FTCL and for two consecutive years was a Gabriel d'Honot Traveling Scholar for Kings College. I went to the Monastery of Montserrat in Spain during the summer months to research Medieval Spanish church music.

It is said that this same old magnificent monastery, located not far from Barcelona, inspired Wagner to write "Parsifal."

In 1960, after a sword duel in Stuttgart, better known as Mensur, I was made an Honorary Life Member of the Germania Koor. In 1971, I was made an Honorary Life Member of the Hebrew



Dining with the Suzukis in 1987

University of Jerusalem. In 1975, the South African Eistedfodd established the Alfred Garson Scholarship for the most promising young violinist, irrespective of race, color or religion.

Apart from studying musicology with Sir Jack Westrup and composition with Matyas Seiber, I studied conducting with Albert Coates and chamber music with Lily Kraus.

I recorded several works including Beethoven's "Spring Sonata" with Lily Kraus.

My violin teachers included Tivadar Nachez Jr., Editha Braham, Joseph Szigeti and Shinichi Suzuki.

My hobbies are cooking, painting and languages. I have so far learned 16 languages but have forgotten at least half of them. In order to keep up a language, it has to be practiced like everything else.

In 1996, I married Irena Don, with whom I have a baby daughter, Hannah. (See the "Dear Family and Friends" letters.)

I also have three grown children, Benjamin, Deborah and Edward, from a previous marriage.

I am registered in the following publications:

Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, 1992.

Who's Who in Music, 1962.

The Blue Book, 1972.

Community Leaders and Noteworthy Americans, 1975.

I am a past board member of the SAA.

I am a past president of the Canadian String Teachers Association.

I am a past president of the Quebec Music Educators Association.

I am a past editor of the *Canadian Music Educator*.

I am a past member of Phi Delta Kappa fraternity.

I live in Montreal, Canada, and teach at McGill University.

AVE MARIA



Suzuki once told me that after his father had bought a record player, he rushed out and bought his first 78 record. It was Schubert's "Ave Maria" played by Mischa Elman. This beautiful piece and Elman's magnificent playing inspired him to learn to play the violin. He was about 17 years old at the time and had never tried to play the violin, let alone had lessons. This is ironic in view of the fact that his father owned the biggest violin factory in the world and Suzuki had been surrounded by violins his whole life.

He was working in the factory at this time, so one day he brought home a violin because he had decided to teach himself the "Ave Maria." Since he did not have the music, and for that matter could not read music, he decided to learn it from listening to the record. He listened to that record until it was almost worn out. No matter how hard he tried, he just could not play those long, slow bows on the lower strings smoothly. The sound he produced was hard and scratchy, and the bow never stopped jumping all over the place. Finally, he gave up on the "Ave Maria" because he could not stand the sound of his own playing.

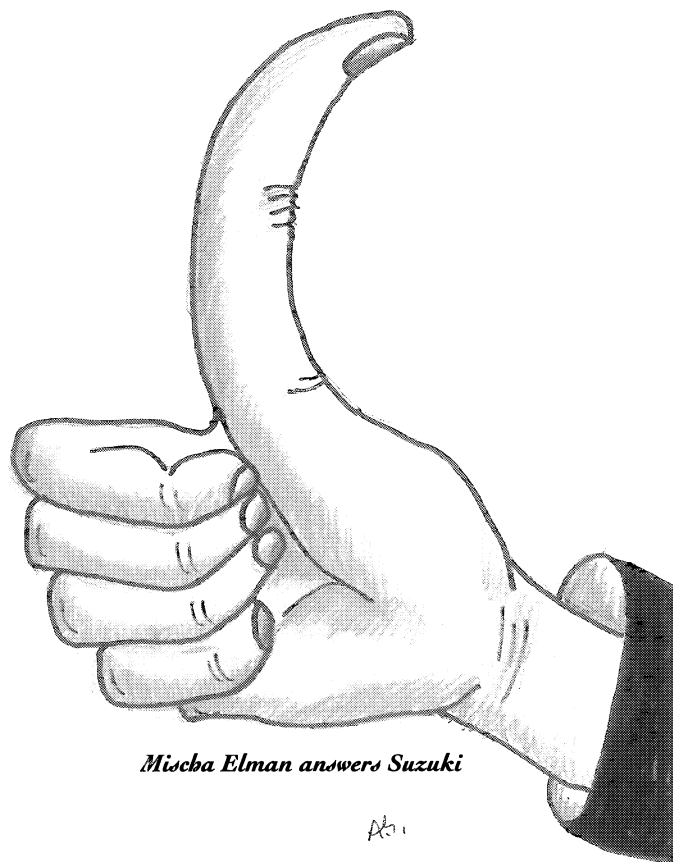
On the other side of the record, Elman played a minuet by Haydn. Suzuki tried to learn this the same way, namely, by listening to the record. This piece he found comparatively easy to learn and got to play it quite well. It was a quicker piece that had to be played with short bows in the upper strings.

In his quasi-autobiographical book, *Nurtured by Love*, he refers to this work as his first "piece" in the chapter entitled "A Whole School Goes on Strike."

"If you refer to the Haydn minuet as your first piece, then surely you must refer to Elman as your first teacher?" was the first question I asked Suzuki after he had told me this story.

"In a way, yes, but I have always considered Kreisler as my life-long teacher," he responded, smiling.

"I know, but Kreisler came into your life after Elman."



Mischa Elman answers Suzuki

"Oh, yes, Elman was the first one to open my eyes to the beauty of the violin."

"Did you ever hear Elman in recital?" I asked next.

"Yes. Not only did I hear him, but I also met him, but I would rather not think about that."

"Suzuki, now you have aroused my curiosity. Why do you not like to be reminded of your meeting with Elman?"

"Because I asked him the most stupid question I have ever asked anyone in my whole life."

"What did you ask him?"

"I asked him which was the most important finger in the bow hold. Without saying a word, he shot his right arm forward, clenched his fist and held up his thumb close to my nose for what seemed a long, long time. Of course, the thumb was the most important finger. Without a thumb, how could anyone possibly hold a bow? But with one of the top fingers missing, it would still be possible to hold the bow. How stupid I had been."

THE SUZUKI VIBRATO METHOD



There is no such thing.

This does not exist despite what has been written and said about it.

Sometime in the mid '60s, John Kendall once said to me, "You know something? I have never been able to get anything from Suzuki regarding the teaching of vibrato. He is very evasive and I have never been able to pin him down on it. How about you?"

"Now that you mention it, I've never asked him about it. Come to think of it, you're right, you know. I don't recollect ever having seen him teach vibrato and I've been around with him a lot."

"I know, that's why I ask you. How do you manage to free yourself to such an extent?"

"I have a very understanding boss at McGill University who encourages me to spend as much time as I can with Suzuki. I have a flexible time table, and as head of the department, I have ten assistants who take over my pupils whenever I'm away."

"You are very lucky. By the way, have you been to Japan yet?"

"No, I'll wait till the rush is over."

"Well, you have been fortunate in that you did not have to rush over to Japan. Instead, Japan has come to you. In Matsumoto nowadays, you'd be lucky to see him alone for half an hour a week, and that would probably be over lunch. But to get back to the question of vibrato, see what you can do and then let me know."

The result of this conversation was that I was now determined to get a vibrato lesson out of Suzuki if it was the last thing I ever did.

The rush to Japan started in 1966. At that time it was the "in thing" for Suzuki teachers to do. They would go over for anything from one week to one month so as to be able to say that they had studied in Japan. I remember one prominent teacher saying to me, "I'm determined to go over to Japan, even if it is only for a weekend, so I can say I studied there."

Whenever Suzuki teachers met for the first time



Suzuki playing with vibrato

in those days, the first question was always, "Have you been to Japan?" If not, they'd look down their noses at you if they themselves had been there.

This was not unlike children at group lessons, where the first question was always, "What book are you in?"

The reaction to the answer can well be imagined.

As far as the vibrato lesson was concerned, I was biding my time and waiting for the right opportunity.

From time to time, Suzuki would be asked at workshops how to teach vibrato.

"You teach vibrato as late as possible," was his standard answer.

"Yes, but when you have to teach it, how do you teach it?"

"You teach it only after the left hand is in a good position and the intonation is perfect," and after hedging, he would change the subject.

I waited for the right moment.

It came one day in Washington, D.C., when we were alone.

"Suzuki, you've taught me many things by now,