

Suzuki Violin & Your Child

Almost everyone has heard of the “Suzuki Violin Method”, but most parents who call to inquire about violin lessons for their child ask the following questions: “What is Suzuki Violin? Can you tell me what is really involved? Is this method right for my child? Can my child really learn to play the violin?”

The “Suzuki method” is named after a teacher named Shinichi Suzuki. He himself would have preferred that this method be referred to as the “mother tongue method”. This is because of an observation he made around 1933, which was that children around the world were speaking in their own language fluently at a very early age, and with a very high level of proficiency. Although many people believe that a child who makes poor grades in school, or who is labeled as a “bad” student was just born this way, Suzuki believed otherwise. He noticed that even children who were considered to be “brainless or dull witted” were able to speak Japanese fluently, which is considered to be a complicated language to learn! From this observation, Suzuki developed the “mother tongue” method. The key elements of this method consist of the following:

- The environmental conditions and their influences on the newborn as he/she becomes familiar with the sounds in the home, such as familiar voices and music;
- Teaching the child to speak via constant repetition;
- Everyday attitude of the parents after the child begins to talk (a positive approach is emphasized);
- Natural progress through daily practice;
- The success of the parents in building up enthusiasm in the child;
- The child’s happiness resulting from the new-found ability or skill;

Although it has been said that no two Suzuki teachers teach the “Suzuki” method alike, there are certain things that are commonly described as one tries to capture the essence of this method.

When translated into violin training, common elements found are:

- Beginning with basic violin skills as early as 2 ½ or 3 years of age, playing violin recordings as often as possible in the home as soon as the child is born (so that the child is immersed in the sound of the violin the same way he/she is immersed in his or her “mother tongue” right from the beginning),
- Active participation of the parent in the teaching of violin skills that are presented each week at the lessons;
- Attendance by the parent at the violin lessons until the child is old enough to know how and what to practice on his or her own after the lesson is over. (Some parents even take a violin lesson along with their child, which enhances the child’s learning).
- Violin classes are also an important part of this teaching method, since children learn very quickly via watching their peers. Aural skills are heavily emphasized until the child is ready to learn to read music (notes and rhythms).

The current theme of the Suzuki Association of the Americas is “Every Child Can”, which was Mr. Suzuki’s firm belief. His hope was to promote “the happiness of all children” through this method of learning to play the violin. It was also his hope that the children who received this type of training would grow up to be good human beings who would help to build a good society. If you have further questions concerning Suzuki violin training, or would like to explore the possibility of having your child begin violin lessons, please call 248-865-3060 or e-mail sharonrothstein@yahoo.com.