

AN INTRODUCTION TO SUZUKI EDUCATION.

Over 75 years ago Shinichi Suzuki discovered that the process of language learning in young children has a 100% success rate. The Suzuki method hinges on the fact that children can learn the art of playing beautiful music in the same way they learn their own native tongue. This is done by applying simple language learning principles to the subject of music. Suzuki calls this concept the Mother Tongue approach. Children as young as 3 or 4 years of age can begin a lifelong journey of music making through the Suzuki method. Parents are vital to the Suzuki approach. The mother or father will attend lessons and work closely at home practicing with their child. Parents with no musical experience make great home-teachers and benefit by learning music alongside their child. Suzuki's goal was not to train professional musicians, but to develop children's character. His approach seeks to develop the whole child, and unfolds children's natural potential to learn. It also develops children's sensitivity, creativity, self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-discipline.

ENVIRONMENT AND LISTENING

Your first step as a new Suzuki parent is to create a positive musical environment in your home. This starts by incorporating daily listening to the Suzuki repertoire, as well as beautiful music of all genres. In the Suzuki method we think of western musical language much like we do our native tongue. From the moment we are born we are bathed in words. Language is a major

component of our environment, and this exposure gives us the ability to learn to speak. Is it not amazing that children learn this incredibly difficult task with a 100% success rate? Therefore, when we learn the language of music one must put themselves in an environment where music has a valued presence. A valued presence of music in your home is largely your responsibility, and ensuring that your child hears enough fine performances of the Suzuki repertoire (recordings of Suzuki guitar book one) is a major component to your child's success. Some listening will be active, and much of it passive with music in the background.

It is important to have fun in the listening process! Listening repetitively to the repertoire creates in the mind a model that allows the child to teach him/herself with relative ease. Throughout the learning process the correct performance plays inside the child's head. This serves as an example to be matched, and an aural image to duplicate. This image is one that can be heard long after practice time is over. Good listening habits allow the child to learn the notes of the repertoire, and are key to the child's success. Learning the notes of the repertoire is still only one part of the listening experience. I highly encourage all families to listen to other fine recordings and attend live performances. These are key ingredients in the environmental learning process.

REPETITION AND ACCUMULATION

One unique benefit of Suzuki's method is the accumulation of repertoire. In the first years of the Suzuki Method all students will learn the same repertoire. It is set this way for many reasons. The repertoire is sequenced in a way that organizes the technical

demands of playing technique. These technical demands are then built upon and reviewed as the student progresses through each book. This is reflective of the language learning analogy. Would one learn a word then to never see it again? No, in language learning and the Suzuki method we always continue to build upon what we know, and continually refine our abilities to communicate. The pedagogy of a shared repertoire also gives students the ability to share the great joy of playing with one another. Group classes and performance play a large role in the Suzuki method. They not only nurture toward artistry, but more importantly build community, friendship, and inspiration.

THE SUZUKI TRIANGLE

The Suzuki triangle represents the relationship between child, parent, and teacher.

Being a Suzuki parent requires you to:

- Attend lessons
- Take notes
- Ask questions
- Attend group classes & recitals

- Make sure your child has all the materials & equipment they need, and to listen/
practice every day
- Be present
- Be a family that listens to beautiful music
- Be your child's biggest fan

SUZUKI'S VISION

Suzuki had a vision that playing an instrument was not only about playing music. Music education is the means to many other goals throughout life. What is learned will benefit children in whatever path they choose to take. Suzuki's greatest desire of all was to nurture children's education, enable children to have high values, fine sensibilities, and beautiful hearts. He believed that nurturing children's hearts with music would gradually change the world.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Shinichi Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*.

