

Observations and Report

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TALENT EDUCATION -

THE VIOLIN TEACHING METHODS OF MR. SHINICHI SUZUKI

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This report contains various items pertaining to Talent Education, and includes lists, translations, programs, excerpts from articles, and comments in the following order:

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At the conclusion of this report, written in the fall of 1959, five steps were listed as objectives for the years ahead.

1. Volumes 1 and 2 (possibly 3 and 4, also) of Mr. Suzuki's method should be published in America, with recordings to accompany them. The writer intends to explore thoroughly the possibilities of publication.
2. A second, somewhat longer trip to Japan should be made to study further the aspects of the method which pertain particularly to the American situation (i.e., parent participation, group teaching methods of teaching note-reading, etc.)
3. Following this trip, the writer should make himself available to help teachers who are interested in setting up experimental programs, using the manuals and recordings, and following the outline of the Talent Education method.
4. At a later date, a trip to America by Mr. Suzuki would be an important factor in answering questions and following up the development of the programs underway in this country.
5. Finally, as a cultural exchange, as an educational adventure, as a potent demonstration of international understanding--there should be an exchange of student groups between Japan and America: perhaps a group of young Japanese violinists coming to America, and an American High School Orchestra going to Japan.

Now, in the spring of 1964, it may be interesting to re-examine these steps and the extent of their fulfillment:

1. Volumes one and two of "Listen and Play", with recordings, plus a supplement and accompaniment book, have been published by Summy Birchard Co. Volumes three and four are in preparation, and also an adaptation of the method for cello.
2. The writer did take a second trip to Japan during March, April and May of 1962. Re-established friendships, visits to new centers of Talent Education, lessons to 80 Japanese students of different ages, making movies and tapes of various performances - these were only a part of a total experience which confirmed and strengthened the belief in this highly significant teaching experiment.
3. Between 1959 and the present, the writer has been extremely fortunate in being able to visit more than 100 colleges, schools, and communities in 35 states, presenting lectures, demonstrations, and workshops ranging in length from one hour sessions to two weeks of classes.

The interest in Mr. Suzuki's ideas remains high, and many centers in various parts of the country are making exceedingly successful use of the "Listen and Play" teaching methods.

4. With the plans now completed for a trip to America by Mr. Suzuki and a group of 10 young violin students, this objective is almost realized. Beginning on March 5th in Seattle, Washington, the group will appear in 14 places, including the MENC national conference at Philadelphia and the California Music Education Ass'n meetings near San Francisco.

Cultural exchange is constantly taking place, of course, but the need here outlined remains largely unsatisfied. It is to be hoped that its tremendous importance will eventually bring about a continuing program, on a sustained basis, with adequate financial support.

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The generosity of the Presser and Bok Foundations in making this first trip to Japan possible deserves continuing appreciation not only from the writer, but also from the many teachers with whom he has shared the ideas and experiences resulting from the venture.

The support of the Presser Foundation has also been a decisive factor in bringing Mr. Suzuki and the children to this country.

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Some Articles dealing with Mr. Suzuki's ideas, appearing since 1959:

"Violin Teaching for Three Year Olds: Ten Stereotypes Re-examined", by John Kendall, The Instrumentalist (Evanston, Illinois: March, 1960).

"A Report on Japan's Phenomenal Violinists", by John Kendall, Violins and Violinists; Outline of Talent Education Method - Shinichi Suzuki (Wm. Lewis and Son, Chicago) reprint available on request.

"Strings in the U.S.A.--A Look at the Last Ten Years", American String Teachers Bulletin, January, 1962.

"Playing by Ear", News report in Time Magazine (New York City: August 24, 1959).

"All Children are Musical", by Rachel Carr, Woman's Day, March, 1963.

"The Resurgent String Program in America--Some Examples, Explanations, and Exhortations", by John Kendall, M.E.N.C. Journal (September-October, 1963).

## A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF TALENT EDUCATION

Shortly after World War II, Mr. Suzuki, recovering from a serious illness, looked around him at the plight of Japanese children and determined to find some way to give them creative activity, and a new hope for their lives. Before the war, as a musician trained in Europe, Mr. Suzuki had been teaching violin. Now, he realized the value which violin playing would have for these tiny youngsters who so much needed attention and creative activity. Moving to Matsumoto after his recovery, Mr. Suzuki found that there were no violins available so, as his first students began to study, they used only one violin, taking it from home to home for practice.

A few years later, he had interested many parents, and additional teachers in his idea for teaching violin to the very young students. He had published the first of his manuals for teachers and parents. Talent Education was established. Violins, all sizes, soon became available.

Now, twelve years later, there are nearly seventy teachers, four thousand five hundred students in approximately 45 different centers in various parts of Japan. Beginning in 1954, some 1500 of these students played together annually at a Festival in the Tokyo sports palace, before thousands of parents and interested spectators. Each summer since 1949, teachers, parents and pupils have gathered at Matsumoto for a four-day summer school, giving concerts, learning new music and playing musical games. Teachers exchange ideas, parents become acquainted with each other, and everyone participates in the sincere enjoyment of making music together.

Many brilliant violinists have gone from Talent Education to other parts of the world. Among them are Toshiya Eto, faculty member at Curtis Institute; Koji Toyoda, Concert master of the Cologne Chamber Orchestra; Kenji Kobayashi, student at Juilliard; Hidetaro Suzuki, student at Curtis; Yoko Arimatsu and Tomiko Shida, students of Grumiaux.

Probably 8000 students including those who have studied, or are presently studying, have been part of the Talent Education movement. Mr. Suzuki insists that the primary purpose of Talent Education is not to train artists, but to give all children the opportunity to develop the amazing potential, which is illustrated in their ability to learn their mother tongue.

What is the system, the method, the organization which has been so successful? Like any complex process, it cannot easily be described, and no single aspect holds the secret to success. The total process must be understood, including several key factors:

1. Beginning at a very early age (2½ or 3 years for actual playing-the earlier the better for listening).
2. Listening regularly to recordings of the music being studied, and the music to be studied next.
3. Private lessons, of a length suitable for the age and attention span of the student, with the mother (or father) attending each lesson, and actually learning along with the student, taking notes, learning to tune the violin, understanding the correct posture and habits.

4. Regular daily practice with the parents helping, guiding, always encouraging, making the student sense the importance of what he is doing, but not forcing him to it.
5. Everything is learned by memory. No music is used by the student until his technique is established. This may take two or more years. In the meantime, the parents use the manuals, follow the music, teach correct fingering and bowing, in cooperation with the teacher.
6. After note reading is begun, the same process of listening to records and quickly memorizing all music is continued. No music is ever used at a lesson - all lessons and performances are by memory.
7. Each student, regardless of ability, follows the same sequence of material. Few etudes are used, and while one student may move faster than another, each goes through the same musical material, with the result that all have a common body of musical materials which they can play together in unison during the regular ensemble meetings.
8. There are 10 manuals of carefully selected music, including a great deal of Baroque violin music of Vivaldi, Bach, and Handel, as well as Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and a few folk melodies. With the exception of the Seitz violin concerto, good for pedagogical purposes, there is no music which would not stand on its own as the best music in our western heritage.
9. Cooperation, not competition, is the motivation. Students at all levels play together. Older students help the younger. There is a wonderful attitude among parents, teachers, and students, with mutual respect in evidence. Each lesson begins and ends with student and teacher bowing to each other.
10. Pedagogy used by Mr. Suzuki and the teachers is up-to-date and utilizes many of the teaching devices currently in favor in America, including exercises, for the left hand, rhythmic variants, bowing gymnastics, shifting exercises, and for the very young, beginning in the middle section of the bow, using staccato, frets taped or marked on the fingerboard, systematic explanation of finger patterns, a key approach geared to these patterns - and many other ideas, "games" and teaching devices.

In summary, Mr. Suzuki himself gives five key points in Talent Education.

1. The earlier the better - not only music, but all learning.
2. The human being is a product of his environment.
3. Repetition of experiences is important for learning.
4. Teacher and parents (adult human environment) must be at a high level and continue to grow to provide a better learning situation for the child.
5. The system or method must involve illustrations for the child based on the teacher's understanding of when, what, how.

OUR MOVEMENT AND OUR HOPE

(Mr. Shinichi Suzuki's preface to the program presented  
by 1500 Japanese children at Tokyo, March 1958)

All human beings are born with great potentialities, and each individual has within himself, the capacity for developing to a very high level. Although some individuals display a remarkable ability during their lifetime, we are not primarily concerned here with these extraordinary cases. However, there are many others, born with a high potential, who fail in some way, through unfavorable conditions, to develop their original power, so that their lives end at a comparatively low level.

Education begins from the day of birth. We must recognize the amazing power of the infant who absorbs everything in his surroundings and adds to his knowledge. If attention is not given to early infancy, how can the child's original power be developed? We learn from nature that a plant which is damaged or stunted during the sapling stage does not have a promising future. Yet at present, we know very little about proper training for the early infancy of human beings. Therefore, we must learn more about the conditions in which early human growth takes place.

Though still in an experimental stage, Talent Education has realized that all children in the world show their splendid capacities by speaking and understanding their mother language, thus displaying the original power of the human mind. Is it not probable that this mother language method holds the key to human development?

Talent Education has applied this method to the teaching of music: children, taken without previous aptitude or intelligence tests of any kind, have almost without exception made great progress.

Cultural sensitivity is not inherited, but is developed after birth. The hereditary ability of the mind is measured by the speed with which it adapts to circumstances. It is wrong to assume that special talent for learning music, literature, or any other field, is primarily inherited.

This is not to say that everyone can reach the same level of achievement. However, each individual can certainly achieve the equivalent of his language proficiency, in other fields. We must investigate methods through which all children can develop their various talents. In a way this may be more important than the investigation of atomic power. After twelve years, Talent Education now demonstrates the harvest of its educational experiment in music, and after observing and hearing the performances of these children, we adults should reflect, and consider whether this method is not the best way to develop all human talents.

(Translation and digest made through collaboration of:  
Dr. Honda, Mr. and Mrs. David Hoshino, and Mr. Kendall.)

## DISCUSSION OF METHODS USED BY MR. SUZUKI

In the Spring of 1958, a group of string teachers incredulously watched, and listened to, a movie of 700 Japanese children playing the Bach "Concerto for 2 violins" at the Sports Palace in Tokyo. The phenomenal results achieved by these youngsters aroused a great deal of interest, enthusiasm, and discussion. At that time it seemed to this writer that some American teacher should make the trip to Japan and observe firsthand the teaching methods used with these children. With this in mind, correspondence was carried on with Mr. Shinichi Suzuki, the teacher who is responsible for "Talent Education," as the violin teaching system in Japan is called. His cordial invitation to visit, plus the financial help of two foundations, the Bok and the Presser Foundations, made possible a six weeks' trip to Japan in the summer of 1959, for observation and study.

During the course of the summer, with the wonderful cooperation of Mr. Suzuki and the teachers and parents of Talent Education, the writer had excellent opportunities to hear Japanese students of ages ranging from 3 to 17 years, singly and in groups. (See Section VII for summary of trip.) As might be expected, six weeks was not enough time to get a complete or final conception of this system, or movement. It did, however, convince the writer of several things: first, that this method, after twelve years of experiment in Japan, has achieved amazing results; second, that three-year-old children are not too young to learn to play the violin; third, that we are wasting five years of good "learning time" in America by waiting until the fourth grade to begin violin classes; fourth, that rote, or memory teaching of violin may be extended to two or even three years without, in any way, interfering with the child's later abilities to read music; fifth, that competition is not necessarily the strongest motivation for progress in learning, and that love of music for its own sake, and the performance of it as a cooperative venture, together with a continual encouragement to self development, can be powerful motives for students; and finally, that we should certainly experiment in America with the teaching methods and ideas which have been so successful in Japan.

The basic question to be answered by this experiment would not lie in the area of violin techniques, teaching methods, or the intrinsic talent of children, but rather in the area of cultural patterns: Is the American way of life so essentially different from the Japanese that a method such as Talent Education could not work here?

When Mr. Suzuki was asked the question: "Could you take 50 four-year old children, selected at random, regardless of background, and teach all of them to play correctly the Vivaldi a minor Concerto?" His reply was a definite affirmative. He emphasized also his conviction that they could be Japanese, American, African, or any other national or ethnic group, provided they and their parents could work under his supervision, using his methods. Of course, the length of time needed would vary, and all would not play equally well. But all could attain the goal. Mr. Suzuki's belief in the potential of all children everywhere is strongly stated in his philosophy of Talent Education. (See Section II - "Our Movement and Our Hope") Speculation about the validity of Mr. Suzuki's system is endlessly interesting, but only actual experiment can provide the answer in America.

Is it a "new system"? Ever since the skeptical sage in Ecclesiastes remarked that "there is nothing new under the sun", it has been a favorite pastime of historians and scholars to reiterate this point whenever the success of an experiment is proclaimed. They are right, of course, and we must be cautious about proclaim-



ing, in the enthusiasm of discovery, that something is new, or unique. Yet surely there are new combinations of ideas or procedures, and fresh, creative approaches to problems. To this observer, the Talent Education movement in Japan illustrates a new combination of ideas.

True, there is nothing new about starting youngsters at an early age. We often quote, but seldom practice, the old adage: "Give me a child until he is six, and you may have him after that." Many educators have suggested and carried out plans for teaching music to pre-school children, but nowhere except in Japan, to the writer's knowledge, has there been a thorough and systematic exploration of the potential of children at the age of 3 to 6 years of age, using violin as a means of expressing their remarkable capacity for learning.

It is also true that rote teaching is not new. It has been used in various ways at various times. But in America, the general attitude toward instrumental rote learning has been one of caution, based on a deep-rooted conviction that unless reading music is taught early, correctly, continuously, the eye-brain-finger relationship will not develop properly. Exactly how sight reading ability develops is still in doubt, except that it seems to be a result of time spent in sight reading. Furthermore, there was in the Western world for many years a faint suspicion that "playing by ear" was rather a sinful, if pleasurable, pastime. So it is natural for teachers to raise an eyebrow when they hear of a system which teaches students to play a Bach "Gavotte" or a Handel "Bourree" before note reading is even begun.

Nor is there anything new about using the best music for very young children-- Bach, Mozart, Vivaldi, Handel, Beethoven. This has always been the approved practice among good teachers. Some American teachers have, from time to time, taken up the cause of teaching without etudes, using only techniques based on the actual music studied. But again, nowhere except in Japan, has a continuous and systematic set of materials for violin been published, going from the beginning to the Mozart and Bach concerti, with none of the standard etudes and only a few scales. (See complete list of Mr. Suzuki's ten manuals - Section VI.)

While in some piano class teaching and also private instruction, mothers are encouraged to come to the lessons, and help the children, many teachers are not interested in having the parents attend every lesson. Parents, particularly mothers, on the other hand, are at the very center of Mr. Suzuki's plan. Not only do they attend each private lesson, and monthly ensemble class, they take notes, study the manuals, and practice daily with the child at home, basing their help on constant encouragement and patient repetition.

Certainly, children in America begin piano, and occasionally other instruments, at a very early age. But in violin, at least, this is the exception, rather than the rule. It is generally conceded that the fourth grade (about 10 years old) is the ideal time to begin string classes in American schools. Yet in Japan, under Mr. Suzuki's system, the average ten-year-old is playing the Bach "Double Concerto", the Vivaldi "a minor Concerto" with ease and security! And it should be noted that there are no aptitude tests given, no "screening": Any child who can speak the Japanese language is accepted as a student.

Perhaps one should be cautious about proclaiming Talent Education as something new. As in the case of any apparently revolutionary experiment, however, one must look at the total plan, the combination of ideas, the relationship of these to objectives, and of course, results.

So, in the Suzuki method we have children of ages two and a half years and up, learning by rote for as long as two years or perhaps even longer, until the technique is established. Teaching is based almost exclusively on standard violin literature, without etudes, until the student can play such compositions as the Mozart D Major Concerto. No music is ever used at the lesson, even after the student is reading music to learn his new assignments.

The fact that there are now approximately 4500 students studying violin under this system in Japan should not lead one to think of it as a "mass education" system. Basically, it is a private lesson system, with each student receiving one lesson a week. But, in addition to this, about once a month the students of each teacher gather for unison and ensemble playing. And, of course, most spectacular of all are the annual gatherings of hundreds of students (1500 last May) to play the repertoire known to all of them in a great concert at the Tokyo Sports Palace.

After six weeks of visiting classes, private lessons, and group performances in various parts of Japan, this writer is ready to acclaim a true Renaissance of violin playing which is not only achieving the highest standards of technique, but is musically sound, and based on philosophical concepts of the finest kind. Here is no exploitation of youngsters by rigid, inhibiting, parent domination. Rather - patient persistent encouragement, combining the teacher's knowledge with the parent's help, and maintaining a close cooperation between them - these factors are the key to the program. Discipline, yes. But discipline based on parents' love, attention, time spent with the child, not upon unquestioning obedience, or fear of punishment.

As an example of this system at work, here is a description of typical violin teaching at Fujisawa, a seaside city of 120,000 just south of Tokyo. Fujisawa has no civic or school auditorium large enough or suitable for community concerts. Music in the schools is for the most part vocal. But interested residents have cooperatively purchased a small plot of land, and moved a building there, adding to and remodeling it as a center for Talent Education. Here, the teacher, one of Mr. Suzuki's staff, teaches privately, and once a week, holds a class for all students in the area, and their mothers. On the day the author visited, a violin class was in session. After the usual preliminary tunings, the teacher and students bowed to each other (a custom followed in both private and group meetings at the beginning and end of the lesson.) Then followed a series of gymnastic drills with the bow and some bowing exercises based on variations of a melody known by all the students. For the next hour, the entire group worked on the Bach "Gavottes" from the D Major Suite, the Boccherini "Minuet", and the Vivaldi "a minor Concerto". Passages were practiced in unison slowly, and in certain difficult places, each individual played alone, beginning with the five-year-olds. No music was used at any time.

During intermission, the children went outside to play while mothers, teachers, and the writer had a discussion of music teaching in Japan and America, sharing ideas and common problems. We discovered again the obvious fact - that good teaching is everywhere the same: it involves patience, constant encouragement, enthusiasm, psychological insight, technical and musical proficiency, use of good materials and methodology, and above all, imagination.

Solos began after intermission: a five-year-old who had studied for two years played the Vivaldi "g minor Concerto", with vibrato and precise, clear technique, using a quarter-sized violin. Then a twelve-year-old girl played the entire Veracini "Sonata in D" with beautiful phrasing and a sensitive style. A thirteen-

year-old girl played brilliantly the Mozart "D Major Concerto" with the Joachim cadenza; and finally, a sixteen-year-old performed the Lalo "Symphonie Espagnole", first movement, with facility and fire. I asked her to play a three octave scale, but discovered that these students haven't practiced scales systematically. However, the teacher explained to her, and she played a three octave F major scale with somewhat unorthodox fingering, but precisely, and in tune, with correct shifting habits.

Any one of these solo appearances might not be so remarkable in itself, but when student after student, selected at random, performs securely and musically, with good intonation and sense of style, these works of the standard repertory, at an age often 6 years younger than usual, one cannot help being impressed. It is easy to forget, after hearing so many, that these five and six year olds are playing at the level we expect from high school students in America.

On another occasion, 180 children gathered in the American Cultural Center in Tokyo, and beginning with simple pieces, played for an hour, all without music, of course, ranging through Handel's "Bourree", Eccles "Sonata", Vivaldi "Concerto in a minor", the Bach "Concerto in a minor", and the Bach "Double Concerto". As their level was reached, the smaller ones dropped out, but almost all were able to play the Bach "Double Concerto" and the Vivaldi. All of these performances were without conductor, but with piano accompaniment. The students listened to each other, and played with excellent ensemble. There was the usual youthful tendency to rush in some difficult spots, but this was easily brought under control by a few signs from the leader.

A typical program given in Matsumoto (Mr. Suzuki's home about 120 miles north of Tokyo) by 90 students included the following:

- 1) Mozart - Rondo - played by 7 students (ages 12-17)
- 2) Mozart - Concerto in D Major - 1st movement - 14 students
- 3) Handel - Sonata in D Major - 1st 2 movements - 20 students (ages 10-15)
- 4) Bach - Double Concerto - 1st movement - 30 students  
(youngest, aged 5 years - oldest 17 - most students 9 or 10)
- 5) Vivaldi - Concerto in a minor - 1st movement - 50 students  
(youngest aged 4 - most students 6-10 years old)

#### Intermission

Musical games, "tests", with the entire group of 85 or 90 students. Mr. Suzuki would clap rhythms, and the children, recognizing the composition, would play it together. Or he would pantomime the bowing of a piece they had studied, and they would guess what it was. The students playing the Vivaldi were divided in two groups: Group 1 began to play with instructions to stop when Mr. Suzuki clapped his hands, so that group 2 could begin without a break in the music. Back and forth from one group to the other, the Vivaldi was played without hesitation, and with a steady tempo! All of this was performed by memory, and Mr. Suzuki selected difficult spots at which to give the signal! Obviously, these children knew the concerto thoroughly.

- 6) Boccherini - Minuet - 60 students (age 3 and up)
- 7) Beethoven - Minuet in G - 65 students
- 8) Gossec - Gavotte - 70 students
- 9) Bach - Minuet - 70 students
- 10) Suzuki - Allegro - 75 students
- 11) Suzuki - Perpetual Motion - 80 students



- 12) Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star Variations - all 90 of the students - 3 years old and up - older children playing harmony parts.

If we were to take a small child, aged three, and follow his progress through the "system", the sequence might be something like this: First, the parents begin daily playing of recorded violin pieces, including and emphasizing, the first piece which the child is to learn (Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star with Variations). Several weeks later, the child is taken to some violin lessons, or ensemble classes and allowed to watch and listen to the other children playing. Then he is given his own instrument--one-sixteenth size, or larger, if necessary. The proper size is determined in the usual way--having the child hold his left hand around the scroll of the instrument to see if he can reach properly.

The teaching begins immediately with rhythms on open strings--four detached sixteenth notes and two staccato eighths in the middle of the bow. In fact, the teacher may tape two spots on the bow, so that the child can visually check the use of only six or eight inches of bow near the center. The child learns to hold the violin correctly, without the use of the left hand, and with good posture.

With the aid of tape frets on the fingerboard, he learns to place the first three fingers, in the close two-three pattern. Pizzicato may be used by some teachers to eliminate the double problems of bow technique and left hand at the same time. His first piece is "Twinkle, Twinkle", played with variations: first 4 sixteenths and two eights; then eighth and two sixteenths. Then four sixteenths, triplets (may be omitted if too difficult) and finally in the original version.

All work is kept in the middle of the bow, and quite staccato. "Stop, think, and play", is the motto some of the teachers use.

While the staccato may result in a somewhat scratchy tone at first, it rapidly develops the kind of bow control which will allow the child to improve his legato tone later.

With extremely small children, or those with a double-jointed thumb, the bow may be held with the thumb on the bottom of the frog, which makes a correct hand position quite easy to attain. As the thumb becomes stronger, he may return it to the stick for part of the time.

As the child adds new pieces to his repertory, proceeding through the manuals, he listens first to recordings, and then begins to work out the finger patterns and bowings with the help of parents and teachers. But always, he keeps on practicing his first piece to improve it still further. In fact, he is still playing the basic bowing variants of "Twinkle, Twinkle" ten years later, just as we continue speaking the first words we learn in any language. This repetition is the key to constant improvement of the basic factors in technique. Also it makes possible the group concerts by memory, of children from all parts of Japan, coming together to perform, without rehearsal, the violin literature in their repertory.

While the child's progress for the first year may not be phenomenal, he picks up speed during the following years, and his good foundation, plus the repetition factor, cause very rapid growth.

Development of skills in shifting, vibrato, bowing, string crossing, and trills come in relation to their appearance in musical context, and exercises grow out of this same context, for the most part. Mr. Suzuki has published one set of shifting exercises, and one set of etudes based on fifths for more advanced students. He readily admits that as students reach levels above his ten manuals, they will need scales and etudes. But why, he asks, should they waste time on "manufactured materials" before this level?

It will be noted in the manuals that the child moves very quickly to music literature which is challenging, particularly to music by the Baroque masters: Bach, Handel, Vivaldi. This music is rhythmically and melodically interesting, and utilizes the solid bowing patterns begun with the very first piece.

From this point on, the musical materials used are of the highest caliber, so that continued practice on one composition is interesting and worthwhile. Motivation is constantly provided, also, by the group performances described earlier in the report.

During all of this process, certain attitudes are emphasized: 1. Mutual respect between teacher and pupil, and between parents and child, as symbolized by the bowing "ceremony" at the beginning and end of each lesson; 2. The importance of learning to play violin as a noble, human achievement; 3. The joy of continuously improving, always playing better; 4. The idea of playing for each other, for parents, and for audiences, in order to give them great music; and 5. The idea of helpful cooperation with fellow students and others (not competition or rivalry).

The methods described here are not a panacea, or a magic formula, but a live, experimental process, producing dramatic results. It should not be implied, however, that there are no problems or weaknesses--this would naturally be impossible. Problem areas include: slow learners, sight reading, musical materials for older students, the need for ensemble and orchestral experience, and always--financial problems--for parents, teachers, and for the whole movement. But the spirit and determination are high among those who work in the Talent Education movement. A fortnightly bulletin is circulated to all teachers and to parents of the 4500 students. This bulletin, giving hints for solving technical problems, news of performances, and inspirational messages from Mr. Suzuki, tends to make all its readers aware of their common purpose.

Perhaps some of the most intriguing aspects of this method are uncovered as a result of questions and answers between teachers and parents in Japan and America. The following section of this report gives a cross-section of questions and answers based on many informal meetings with teachers and parents from both countries.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BASED ON DISCUSSIONS  
WITH JAPANESE PARENTS AND TEACHERS

I. QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO JAPANESE PARENTS BY THE WRITER:

1. Do you have a fixed time for your children to practice each day?

Most parents did not, since their own schedules varied. With pre-school age children it is easier. Once in school, the children usually practiced at night after school. One mother always has her child practice after a meal, to associate practice with the pleasure of a full stomach!

2. When do the children listen to the records of the pieces they are studying?

They begin listening before they are ready to learn the piece. Perhaps several weeks ahead. The parents play the records at different times, but not necessarily just before or after the practice period. The children do not make a habit of playing with the recordings, although this might be done on occasion.

3. Do you have the recordings?

Almost all. Some parents have not gotten them, but take their children to lessons or to concerts where they can hear the music played by other children.

4. Do you supervise the practice closely, or merely get the children started and leave them alone?

With the very young children, the mothers actively supervise the practice, reminding the child of what the teacher has told him, and correcting posture, right and left hand positions, intonation, etc. Also, the mother tunes the violin for the child. As the child grows older, there is less supervision, especially if the child is a fast learner.

5. Are there problems with brothers and sisters?

Often, if one child in the family begins to study, the other children become interested also. The second child to begin study usually shows faster progress than the first, probably because he has opportunity to hear the older child play, and to learn from him.

6. Do children ever become angry or rebellious about your "guided practice?"

Japanese children are not essentially different from American in this respect. But they do have a seriousness of purpose, and a persistence which is remarkable. Therefore, they tend to accept parent guidance. Parents with whom I talked showed consistently patient, encouraging attitudes toward the children.

7. If the child wants to quit taking lessons, is he allowed to do so? or to change to another instrument?

Some children do stop lessons, of course. Probably fewer in proportion to those studying than in America, partly because the decision to begin

lessons involves financial sacrifice to most families, but more probably because parents feel that it is important for the child to play, and this attitude is sensed by the child. This is a most important factor. Changes to other instruments are unlikely, in view of the almost prohibitive expense of woodwind and brass instruments compared to strings.

8. How do you mothers learn to read music so that you can tell if the child is playing correctly at home during practice sessions?

Many mothers actually learn to play themselves. And by watching the music at each lesson, and working directly with the teacher, and observing marked-in fingerings, they are able to help the child at home.

9. Do Japanese homes have TV sets, radios, comic books?

Most of the parents with whom I talked were middle class or professional people. Therefore, many of them have TV sets. Practically all have radios. And there are Japanese comic books! However, the parents seemed to be able to keep these under control, and the homes in which I visited were certainly not dominated by TV. Nowhere in Japan did I visit a home in which the TV set was left on during the visit - something which happens all too often in America.

10. Are Japanese parents as busy as American parents?

Apparently so. The fathers (in urban areas) come home late from work, and both parents are often members of PTA groups, civic organizations, or other community activities. But again - they feel that it is important for their children to take violin lessons, and they give time to home practice, and to taking the child to lessons.

11. How do the children get interested in taking violin lessons?

Not, as it so frequently happens in America, through the public school music program. There is no parallel in Japan to our instrumental school music program in America. But children do see other children with violins, and their interest is aroused. Sometimes private teachers talk with parents, and other parents try to interest friends in having their children study. In Japan today, there is a tremendous interest in music lessons. It is estimated that over 50,000 youngsters are studying privately on some instrument in Tokyo alone.

## II. QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO THE WRITER BY AMERICAN TEACHERS.

1. When, and how, do the children begin to read music?

The time will vary, according to the age of the student. If the child has begun to play at the age of three, it may be two or three years before he begins to use music to learn new pieces. If, on the other hand, he begins at a later age, this period of rote playing may be shorter. In any case, before the child begins the study of the Seitz concerto, Vol. IV, he is taught to read music. Essentially the process of learning is one of association--he watches the notes while he plays a piece he has already learned by memory, so that the logic of notation becomes apparent, not as

a struggle to produce music from difficult symbols, but as a natural means of visualizing what he has already learned.

2. Can the violin students in Talent Education sight read?

Yes, the students aged 10-15 whom I "tested" were able to read fairly well, although they need the added experience which ensemble and orchestra will give. With an expanding orchestral program in Japan for young people, I have no doubt that most of these children will be able to sight read with facility.

3. Are violas and cellos taught in the same way?

Although violin is the basic instrument in Talent Education, cello teachers in Tokyo, and Kyoto have begun using Mr. Suzuki's approach, and it is expected that cello students will soon be playing an active part in the programs. It is well realized that for ensemble experience this will be a most important step. Viola will be based on transition from violin.

4. Is this a class lesson or private lesson method?

Mr. Suzuki's method has been developed on a private lesson basis, although ensemble and class meetings are a regular part of the program. Each student (with his mother) receives private instruction weekly.

5. Would this method work on a class lesson basis?

It is Mr. Suzuki's belief that his ideas could be utilized through class lesson procedures, by making certain adjustments (but not by altering the basic factors). This writer agrees with this, and feels that if the method is to have wide acceptance in America, it will probably come via the class lesson approach. The problem here is that our public school music program is not primarily concerned with the pre-school age groups - and this is the age at which the teaching will be most successfully begun.

6. Is there a danger that "imitation" of recordings will interfere with the child's musical growth, and keep him from developing his own style?

To answer with a question - Is there a danger that a child who learns his language from his parents will imitate their ideas as well as their manner of speaking? Yes, there is a "danger." The real question lies in the element of time - when does any student, under any "system" learn to think for himself, to develop his own style, through his own analysis? This will vary as the maturity factor varies, but certainly there are many students who never really become independent as musicians or performers. It is always a struggle, and the important thing is to have good "models" to imitate during the formative stages. Listening to recordings of great artists provides such models, and with the proper guidance in analysis from a sound teacher, a student should not be harmed by this listening and "imitation". If he is particularly gifted, and continues to study with the idea of becoming an artist-performer, of course he must develop his own style, his own character - this is inevitable. If he does not have this as a goal, but continues to play violin as part of his cultural



life, has he suffered by "imitating records"? I doubt it, and I saw no evidence of it during the six weeks in Japan.

7. What is the cost of a small sized violin in Japan today?

The cost is about \$10.00 for violin, bow, and case. This extremely low cost is one reason for the success of violin as an instrument for the very young children, plus, of course, the more important fact that it is available in various sizes to fit the child.

8. How much do lessons cost?

Lessons vary in cost, and in length, according to the age of the student. The cost of lessons is in the range of 500 Yen to 1,000 Yen per month (\$1.40 to 2.80 - American money). Group lessons are about 50¢ a month extra, and practically all parents pay for this, too. The finances present a great difficulty to both parents and teachers. What seems to be a negligible amount to us is a burden to low income families in Japan. On the other hand, a teacher who has 100 students (a heavy load by American standards) makes only \$280.00 a month!

9. What is the staccato approach to violin playing?

The staccato approach begins by using the middle six or eight inches of bow only, and playing incisive rhythms, staccato and detached in this part of the bow. "Stop, think and play" is the motto - and from the very beginning rhythmic and staccato variations are the basis for developing bow control and technique. As the student progresses, the full bow is used and the fairly rough tone quality begins to smooth out for legato playing. I observed no injurious "after-effects" of this early staccato approach, and a characteristic of the students' playing in general was a phrase-conscious, musically flowing style.

10. When do the students learn vibrato?

Vibrato is taught in varying ways and at varying times, according to the individual teacher. I heard 5 year olds using vibrato in the Vivaldi g minor concerto, and 8 year olds playing with no vibrato. In general, however, use of vibrato is encouraged, and taught, when the child's left hand is established well, and when the child himself, through his listening, has the urge to create this colorful sound. The teachers were very interested in the writer's own techniques for teaching vibrato, and there were many discussions and demonstrations on this point of technique.

11. What is done with children who reach plateaus and need new musical materials?

Mr. Suzuki has published a series of "Sunday Home Concert" volumes to supplement his Volumes I-10. These contain additional musical materials by great composers (mostly 18th and early 19th century).

12. What percentage of boys are there in Talent Education?

About half of the students are boys. There does not seem to be the same

attitude toward string playing as a favored feminine activity that we have in America. Peer judgment of young violinists in Japan seems definitely favorable. There is no stigma attached to carrying a violin case!

13. Are there bands in Japan?

There is no band program in the public schools at present. For one thing, as we well know, band instruments are expensive - far too much so for the Japanese parents, or schools, to afford. Probably this is one factor which definitely has favored the study and playing of violin.

14. Is piano used at the lessons?

This is a matter of availability. If the teacher has a piano in his home or studio, he will use it as any other teacher would - when the student needs it. Most teachers observed did not have pianos available for teaching purposes.

15. Is there a "creative standstill" at the age of 20 which is characteristic of Japanese music students?

This question is far too complicated to be answered on the basis of a short observation. Furthermore, it is a "loaded" question which contains a "built-in" generalization implying cultural, historical, and ethnic analysis as well as a complete analysis of teaching methods. No one should attempt to ask, or answer this question, without a great breadth of study and experience in Japan, as well as in the Western world.

16. In America, the choice of music to fit the students is considered to be an important motivation. What is the motivation for Mr. Suzuki's student since all of them play the same music?

Frankly, my own mind is not settled yet on this point. I am sure, however, that the absence of the competitive attitude in Mr. Suzuki's philosophy is related to this point. In our individualistic, contest-centered, approach to music, different music is definitely implied. In Talent Education, however, where the children aspire to playing together, in unison - the natural process is to study the same music, so that the motivation becomes group centered - in much the same way that American students practice their orchestral music so that they can play better with others. But it should be noted - in the group performance, there is no competition - no vying for first chairs - no status seeking.

17. As students develop and grow older, what vocational opportunities are there in music? Are these stressed, or is becoming a good amateur the main objective?

Mr. Suzuki's method is certainly not "vocation or profession-centered" in its motivation. The artistic beauty, the human values, of great music and its performance are at the center of the system, always. Whether or not a student plans later to become a professional musician or music teacher, is only incidental. The remarkable seriousness of purpose of these students does not seem rooted in drives for "making a living" or economic security. Actually, the field for professional musicians is even more limited in Japan today than it is in America, and since there is not an active instrumental music program in the schools, the field for public school music teachers is also limited.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, the writer wishes to acknowledge the generosity of the Presser Foundation and the Bok Foundation, whose grants made possible this study, and to thank Mr. John Ronald Ott and Mr. J. H. Mattis of these Foundations for their personal encouragement and help.

Also, a tribute is due Mr. Kenji Mochizuki, without whose enthusiastic dedication to the ideas of Talent Education, the writer would never have conceived the plan for making the trip to Japan. To Mr. Mochizuki should go the credit for introducing Talent Education to American Teachers.

\* \* \* \* \*

All of us who are interested in the future of string playing will now ask the question: "Can Mr. Suzuki's methods succeed in America?" It is this writer's opinion that they can succeed, and that the following steps should be taken to bring this about:

1. Volumes 1 and 2 (possibly 3 and 4, also) of Mr. Suzuki's method should be published in America, with recordings to accompany them. The writer intends to explore thoroughly the possibilities of publication.
2. A second, somewhat longer trip to Japan should be made to study further the aspects of the method which pertain particularly to the American situation (i.e., parent participation, group teaching, methods of teaching note-reading, etc.)
3. Following this trip, the writer should make himself available to help teachers who are interested in setting up experimental programs, using the manuals and recordings, and following the outline of the Talent Education method.
4. At a later date, a trip to America by Mr. Suzuki would be an important factor in answering questions and following up the development of the programs underway in this country.
5. Finally, as a cultural exchange, as an educational adventure, as a potent demonstration of international understanding--there should be an exchange of student groups between Japan and America: perhaps a group of young Japanese violinists coming to America, and an American High School Orchestra going to Japan.

Nothing could be more effective in establishing basic understandings than such a venture.

The next 50 years will be crucial ones in which the demands on human leadership will be profound, and Mr. Suzuki's contention that developing the talents of small children is as important as atomic energy may not be as fantastic as it sounds. Certainly, we must begin early to develop to the fullest, the human potential for thoughtful, sensitive, capable leadership.



## SUZUKI VIOLIN METHOD

(List of contents in Manuals 1-10)

Volume I. (accompanied by a "Mother's Manual", and recordings of each piece).

Suggestions and guidance. Pictures to illustrate.

1. Twinkle, twinkle little star. (with rhythm and bowing variations)
2. Lightly row - Spanish Folk Song
3. Warnung - German Folk Song
4. Lied - German Folk Song
5. Die Kinder bei der krippe - German Folk Song close 2-3
6. May Song - German Folk Song finger pattern
7. Long, Long Ago - Bayly
8. Allegro - Suzuki
9. Perpetual Motion - Suzuki
10. Allegretto - Suzuki - introducing close 1-2 finger pattern
11. Andantino - Suzuki
12. Etude - Suzuki
13. Menuetto No. 1 - Bach
14. Menuetto No. 2 - Bach
15. Menuetto No. 3 - Bach
16. Happy Farmer - Schumann
17. Gavotte - Gossec

Volume II. Finger Pattern exercises (close 1-2, close 2-3, close 3-4)

Bowing variations

Broken thirds, with bowings

1. Chorus, Judas Maccabeus - Handel
2. Musette - Bach
3. Hunter's Chorus - Weber
4. Long, Long Ago - Bayly (in a new key, and with variations)
5. Waltz - Brahms
6. Bourree - Handel
7. Two Grenadiers - Schumann
8. Theme from Witches Dance - Paganini
9. Gavotte - Mignon - Thomas  
New finger patterns (first finger back to f natural, and b flat)
10. Gavotte - Lully  
New finger patterns - extended 4th finger and augmented 2nd  
between 1 and 2
11. Minuet in G - Beethoven
12. Minuet - Boccherini

Volume III.

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Gavotte - Martini    | 5. Gavotte - Becker     |
| 2. Menuetto - Bach      | 6. Gavotte No. 2 - Bach |
| 3. Gavotte No. 1 - Bach | 7. Loure - Bach         |
| 4. Humoresque - Dvorak  |                         |

New finger patterns, chord studies, scales in C, F, B flat,  
E flat major scales in a, d, g, c minor.

Volume IV.

1. Allegretto Moderato (Concerto No. 2) Seitz
2. Allegro Moderato (Concerto No. 5) Seitz
3. Rondo (Concerto No. 5) Seitz
4. Concerto in a minor (1st Movement) Vivaldi
5. Concerto in a minor (3rd Movement) Vivaldi
6. Concerto for 2 violins (Violin II) First Movement - Bach
7. Trill studies

Volume V.

1. Gavotte - Bach
2. Exercises for string crossings
3. Concerto in a minor (Second Movement) Vivaldi
4. Concerto in g minor (all three movements) Vivaldi
5. Gigue - Sonata in d minor - Veracini
6. Concerto for 2 violins (Violin I) First Movement - Bach
7. Country Dance - Weber
8. German Dance - Dittersdorf

Volume VI.

1. La Folia - Suzuki - Corelli
2. Allegro - Fiocco
3. Gavotte - Rameau
4. Sonata No. 4 - Handel
5. Andantino - Martini
6. Waltz - Kuhlau
7. Menuetto - Bach

Volume VII.

1. Concerto in a minor - Bach
2. Sonata No. 1 - Handel

Volume VIII.

1. Sonata in g minor - Eccles
2. Sonata in D - Veracini

Volume IX.

1. Concerto No. 5 - Mozart

Volume X.

1. Concerto No. 4 - Mozart

ITEMS CONCERNING SUMMER TRIP TO JAPAN (1959)

- . Length of Stay in Japan - 46 days
- . Cities visited - 16 - including Tokyo, Yokohama, Fujisawa, Odawara, Hakone, Yugawara, Matsumoto, Omachi, Osaka, Kobe, Koriyama, Nara, Kyoto, Nagoya, Karuizawa, and Sewa.
- . Number of students heard: Approximately 1000, including groups ranging from 4 to 400, and 30-40 private lessons.
- . Discussions with parents' groups: 8, including 75 mothers and fathers from Matsumoto, Tokyo, Yokohama, Yagawara, Nagoya, Osaka, Nara, Sewa.
- . Concerts by children's groups: 15, including summer school programs at Matsumoto and Kyoto Junior Orchestra.
- . Concerts by professionals: Tokyo Symphony, Kyoto Municipal Orchestra. Two concerts by Joseph Suk. Hibeya concert by pianist Kazuko Yasukawa.
- . Discussions with teachers' groups: 20, including informal conversations and also the two final "lectures" to teachers at Matsumoto summer school on "Strong Points and Vulnerable Points of Talent Education" which was taped along with the translation, for distribution via Talent Education Newsletter to 4000 on Talent Education mailing list.
- . Newspaper and radio, TV interviews: 6, including N.H.K. (Japanese network). Asahi Evening News, Japan Times, Mainichi Newspaper, Nagano prefecture local papers, Time Magazine.
- . Interviews or conferences with individual Japanese: Indefinite, but continuous, including doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, farmers, ministers, professional musicians, artists, craftsmen, army personnel, government officials, businessmen and, of course, mothers and students without count.
- . Time spent in Japanese homes: 19 days (the remaining 25 in Japanese or Western style hotels.)

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