

Medley Music

Suzuki Parent Handbook

Adapted from the Suzuki Parent Handbook by the
Music Institute of Chicago

“Teaching music is not my main purpose. I want to make good citizens. If children hear fine music from the day of their birth and learn to play it, they develop sensitivity, discipline and endurance. They get a beautiful heart.”

– **Shinichi Suzuki**

Suzuki often refers to students using he/him, and also mentions parents in traditional gender roles. Please note that this does not represent the views of the Suzuki Association of the Americas. Medley Music's goal is to create a healthy environment for children of all genders and families of all types.

Table of Contents

What is the Suzuki Method? -----	3
The Parent's Role -----	8
How to Help Your Child at [Their] Lesson -----	10
Aggravating Antics -----	12
How and Why to Listen -----	14
Practicing -----	16
A Key for Success -----	18
Be Joyful First -----	21
Developing Parent/Teacher Communication -----	22
Group Classes and Growing into Advanced Programs -----	26
Dr. Shinichi Suzuki -----	28
Summary of the Parents Role in Suzuki Violin Lessons -----	32
Care of the String Instrument -----	33
Recommended Reading List -----	35
Resources -----	36

WHAT IS THE SUZUKI METHOD?

The Suzuki Talent Education Method was pioneered in Japan over 50 years ago by Shinichi Suzuki. It is based on the philosophy that all children are born with high potential for learning. If given the opportunity and proper environment, any child can learn to play a musical instrument.

Using the Suzuki Method, students learn to make music in the same manner in which they learn to speak – by listening and imitating (the “mother tongue” approach). All children learn to speak by imitating the language they hear in their daily environment. The mother or father repeats simple words for the baby and provides encouragement as the child successfully imitates the sounds. Such is the case with music. If the child hears an instrument played beautifully and is encouraged by his parents and teacher in a nurturing environment, he will learn to play.

The goals of the Suzuki Method are to enrich the lives of children by playing a musical instrument and to give each child the satisfaction that comes from the ability to do something well. The Suzuki Program offers much more than a private music lesson. It encompasses a philosophy of education that applies to many aspects of a child’s development such as discipline, memory, focus, self-esteem and confidence.

The success of the Suzuki Method depends upon the cooperation and participation of the parent as well as the student. The Suzuki parent is actively involved in the learning process. The parent attends all lessons, supervises listening, and practices with the student each day, making sure the student does exactly as the teacher instructed. The parent is the home teacher, giving praise for each effort, so that practice time is a positive experience. Being a successful Suzuki parent does not depend on any previous knowledge of music. The parent is taught step by step how to help the child at home.

What is the Suzuki Method? (contd.)

The student listens each day to recordings of the pieces he or she is learning. In the Suzuki Method, the child begins playing simple pieces prior to learning how to read music. The child acquires skill and confidence in his or her playing before being asked to begin note reading. Until note reading begins, the parent follows the music and teaches the correct fingering (and bowing for stringed instruments) as instructed by the teacher. All compositions are memorized. Only after a song is memorized can the student concentrate on proper technique and musicality.

Review is an important component of the Suzuki Method. Students spend part of each practice session reviewing previously learned pieces. Here they apply new skills and techniques to songs they already know, hearing for themselves the progress they have made.

Group lessons are an important part of the Suzuki program. At the group lesson, the students have the pleasure of playing together and for one another. Younger students hear the performances of older students and are inspired to work harder in order to play those pieces. Friendships flourish. With a spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm the students and parents encourage each other. It is enjoyable to participate in the social aspect of music from the very beginning.

The use of small sized instruments properly fitted to the child is absolutely necessary, as development of good form and posture is essential. Pianists and guitarists use footstools to aid in good posture, and cellists use chairs of appropriate heights. The teacher aids in selecting instruments and equipment of proper size.

What is the Suzuki Method? (contd.)

Dr. Suzuki's general philosophy intends that the teacher, child, and parents enjoy the learning process. It was Suzuki's belief that talent can be developed. While nothing can be done about heredity, much can be done regarding the environment. His method is not just a means of playing an instrument; it is a way of life that will enrich the child in countless ways. Creating professional musicians was not the goal of Shinichi Suzuki. He believed that with the proper environment and educational process, and through the medium of music, sensitivity and understanding might be raised in children, creating for each child a better life, and for all, a better world.

Some of the basic principles and ingredients of the Suzuki approach are:

1. They are never too old and rarely too young to twinkle! Dr. Suzuki recommended that ability development begin at birth by incorporating Suzuki repertoire recordings as part of the sound in the baby's natural environment. (These recordings may also be supplemented by other fine music.)
2. Move in small steps so the child can master the material with a total sense of success, thereby building confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Every child progresses at his or her own pace.
3. Either the mother or the father attends all lessons so that he or she understands the learning process and can feel secure when working as home-teacher with the child. The most important single ingredient for success is the parent's willingness to devote regular time to work closely with the child and the teacher.

What is the Suzuki Method? (contd.)

4. Daily listening to recordings of the Suzuki repertoire for the chosen instrument is the nucleus of the Suzuki approach. The more students listen, the more quickly they learn.
5. Prepare for music reading in a developmentally appropriate manner. As the child's aural and instrumental skills become well established, music reading is gradually introduced, just as we teach children to read a language only after they can speak. This enables the main focus of the teacher's and student's attention to be on the sound; beautiful tone, accurate intonation, and musical phrasing then become a basic part of the student's earliest training.
6. Follow the Suzuki repertoire sequence so that each piece becomes a building block for the careful development of technique. Equally important is the strong motivation this standardized repertoire provides; students want to play what they hear other students play. Constant repetition of the learned pieces in a student's repertoire is the secret of the performing ability of Suzuki students.
7. Create an enjoyable learning environment in lessons and home practice so that much of the child's motivation comes from enthusiasm for learning and desire to please. When working with children we should remember Dr. Suzuki's exhortation that we must come "down to their physical limitations and up to their sense of wonder and awe."

What is the Suzuki Method? (contd.)

8. Group lessons, in addition to private lessons, and observation of other students' lessons are valuable aids to motivation. Children learn from advanced students and from their peers possibly more than they do from adult teacher directly – children love to do what they see other children do.

9. Foster an attitude of cooperation, not competition, among students and parents. We encourage a supportive atmosphere of each other's accomplishments.



THE PARENT'S ROLE

Adapted with permission from the MSU Suzuki Program Parent Handbook

The Parent as Home Teacher:

In Japan, every Suzuki parent studies the instrument for 6 months prior to the child's lessons. Although this is an option in our school, it is not required. In our program, we introduce the instrument and the Suzuki method to the parent during the initial weeks of the semester through parent orientation classes. This is done so the parent understands what is involved in the early learning experience and can be more effective as the home teacher. Being a successful Suzuki parent does not depend on any previous knowledge of music. (Even parents who have considered themselves "tone-deaf" find that when listening has become a part of daily life, they hum, sing, and recognize the tunes on the recording.) Attendance at the child's lesson and carrying out specific instructions by the teacher for home practice is the way children and parents learn and grow together.

Talent Education, the learning process:

Parents who wish to be good home teachers must constantly remind themselves that they have entered their child in the Suzuki program for the happiness of the child. Learning to play an instrument should not be a struggle undertaken to get the best seat in the school orchestra, or win prizes and fame in contests. Dr. Suzuki conveyed to parents the idea that they can enjoy the learning process as it unfolds, and not merely endure it to attain some future worthy goal.

Dr. Suzuki points out that practice periods should grow in length along with the span of concentration.

"At home two or three minutes of practice may be enough for a beginner. Perhaps this can be done four or five times a day.

The Parent's Role (contd.)

Gradually each practice period can be longer as the child begins to play the Twinkle Variations. If the child can play all the variations of Twinkle, which may take four minutes, their ability to concentrate is also developed to that length of time. As other pieces are added, the period of concentration lengthens naturally.” - Shinichi Suzuki from *Nurtured by Love*

The child's practice is easier much more effective if the parent calls attention to only one point at a time. Sometimes parents give too many instructions at one time. “Your elbow is too high; please raise the violin; your bow is crooked; your third finger is too low,” etc. This is ineffective because children feel they cannot change all of these things at once and become discouraged.

During the practice periods at home, parents should make it clear to the child that they are present as a friend and helper. Parent should avoid negative criticism as a motivation for practice. Instead, their remarks might include, for example: “Why don't you play ‘May Song’ straight through without any stops? Just like a concert!” Or, “Can you play ‘Allegro’ for me, remembering to move your elbow up and down?”

At times, Dr. Suzuki encountered home teachers who pushed their child beyond the teacher's assignment. “Where are you going?” Suzuki asked the parent gently. “Please wait and follow me. I'll lead you there.”

American visitors to Suzuki studios in Japan are often impressed by the attitudes of the parents at lessons. First noticed is the parents' obvious enthusiasm for the music and for the children's playing. If they have tired of the Twinkle Variations, one would never suspect it from their behaviour. They move in rhythm to the music. They tap their feet to the beat and are always ready to smile at the efforts of the children.

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT HIS LESSON

By Juliana McAshan

Attend lessons regularly and teach your child to watch lessons in progress if he must wait his turn. The best way to do this is to watch the lesson yourself. This indicates to your child that something important is going on and also gives him a role for good behavior.

When you practice at home, use the same routines and sequence of events that you observe at the lesson. Use the same language and practice the same exercises that the teacher uses. The teacher is watching for signs that these exercises have become easy and natural for the child, so that he will be ready for the next steps in his learning.

Often a child will appear to be forgetful at his lesson, or do poorly in exercises, which he did well at home. Do not become alarmed at this or interfere by giving him hints and reminders while he is trying to pay attention to his teacher. The reason he is having difficulty is that he is working with a relatively unfamiliar person. By “helping” too much you will only postpone the day when the relationship between the teacher and the child is an easy and natural one. The child’s attention should be centered on his lesson; his work is with the teacher. You can best help him to focus his attention by not intruding on his work.

If you have your child’s best interests at heart, let him make mistakes, because the lesson is a learning process. He is learning through his errors; he is also learning that it is all right to take a chance and that a mistake is not the end of the world.

If a child makes many mistakes in his lesson, do not scold him but resolve to practice more and better with him before the next lesson. Good practice is always the cure for bad lessons.

How To Help Your Child At His Lesson (cont'd)

Sometimes, the teacher will invite the parent to participate. At such times, a complete response is expected, so pay close attention to the lesson.

Bring a notebook to the lesson and write down the important points as the teacher presents them. Study the notes before practice times. If you do this, the child will make steady progress, and will soon be ready for the next step in his learning.

About younger brothers and sisters at the lesson. . . they are always welcome to come, to listen and to learn, but this must never be at the expense of the child receiving instruction.

When watching the lessons of other children, show interest in these students, but avoid making comparisons between your child and others. Such comparisons can be unfair to all concerned, especially since you know a great deal about your own child and very little about the backgrounds of the others.

AGGRAVATING ANTICS

If your child is like most children, he or she will definitely learn to play the chosen instrument. Along the way, however, he or she will most certainly – at one time or another:

- ♪ Lie down on the floor when everyone else is standing.
- ♪ Stand when everyone else is sitting down.
- ♪ Interrupt a lesson with a rambling discourse.
- ♪ Seem more interested in the mechanics of the instrument than in playing.
- ♪ Have times when they feel more sleepy, hungry, angry, or lazy than musical.
- ♪ Have times when they'll declare they hate the instrument (or you).
- ♪ Resist and test your ideas about habit building, especially concerning practice.
- ♪ Get to a lesson and do absolutely nothing that has been worked on at home.
- ♪ Make pronouncements to the teacher regarding your practice or lack of, listening or lack of, home life, family problems and secrets, etc.
- ♪ Appear to you to be the only one out of step in the entire class.
- ♪ Have a 5 to 10 minute attention span and sometimes only 5 to 10 seconds.
- ♪ Deliberately do things backward or incorrectly.

Aggravating Antics (contd.)

These antics appear cute and funny in someone else's child. With their own child, parents are often embarrassed. Remember, it is all part of the learning process. Convey to your child:

- ♪ Interest – I'm here, I care!
- ♪ Faith – I believe they can learn to play!
- ♪ Enthusiasm – this is a neat thing to do!
- ♪ Respect – for you, your very real efforts, and concentration! for the teacher and the teacher's ideas, advice, interest, ability, and training!
- ♪ Enjoyment – of every step along the way.
- ♪ Acceptance – indicated by a pleasant facial expression at lessons, classes and practice
- ♪ Praise – of every small success.

HOW AND WHY TO LISTEN

As Dr. Suzuki says, “Practice (and listen) only on the days you eat!” Listening to the Suzuki recording is as integral a part of your child’s musical education.

Since the “mother-tongue” method is based on imitating what the child sees and hears, listening to the music that is to be learned is essential. No one can learn to speak a language without hearing it, and similarly, hearing the Suzuki recording is an essential ingredient of the child’s learning environment. Just as language is a daily activity, so is daily listening an important part of the child’s musical experience.

Listening should occur as part of the child’s natural environment. It can be played during the day at play times, meal times, bedtime, and in the car. The student does not have to “sit still and listen”; they will absorb the pieces on the recording by daily listening. Remember, it is the parent’s responsibility to turn on the recording!

- ♪ Focus on one part of the music such as tone, rhythm, tempo, articulations, or dynamics.
- ♪ Play, sing, clap the beat, or tap the rhythm along with the recording.
- ♪ Make up a story about the piece being played.
- ♪ Dance to the recording or walk with the beat.
- ♪ Make a game out of listening to the recording.

Some suggestions for listening are...

How and Why to Listen (contd.)

Just as important as listening to the Suzuki repertoire is supplementing your child's education with recordings of standard repertoire by prominent recording artists. Suggested lists for supplemental listening have been provided by your teachers and can be found in the back of this handbook.

Never underestimate the ear. It can teach a child English, Japanese, Finnish, Bach, Mozart, or Tchaikovsky.

PRACTICING

Notes on a workshop lecture by Mary Craig Powell, Feb. 6, 1983

Make practice sessions fun, loving, and positive. The more creative you are, the more fun both you and your child will have together!

Planning a Practice Session

1. Review. Review loosens the hands and arms and establishes good tone. It is also psychologically beneficial to begin with what one knows well.
2. Tonalization. Exercises for the sole purpose of establishing good tone, through proper position, technique, and listening.
3. Technique. Play the “Twinkle Theme and Variations” and any scales or exercises that have been assigned by your teacher.
4. Reading readiness or reading assignment. Preparatory exercises or reading pieces assigned by the teacher.
5. New Suzuki material. Always begin practicing the parts of the piece that need special attention as suggested by your teacher.
6. Review. A positive way to conclude a good practice session.

Practicing - Notes on a workshop lecture (cont'd)

Meaningful review:

1. Review should have a one-point focus assigned by the teacher each week. It can be, for instance, to work on tempo, beautiful tone, good fingering, or even cooperation between parent and child.
2. Organize review so that all pieces are covered within a given period of time.

Some Suggestions for Creative Repetition

1. Use practice cards and stickers as rewards for the child.
2. Use a puppet that nods its head in approval and talks to children giving them suggestions or corrections. This type of activity makes practicing more fun for young children.
3. Use counting objects to count the number of times a skill or passage has been done well like coins or small toys.
4. Use a deck of cards to decide how many repetitions. Jacks mean the sibling chooses, queen the mother chooses, king and father chooses.
5. Use treats. You can place a small treat in view of the child while they practice. If the child behaves and has a successful practice, they get the treat. If not, the parent gets the treat.

A KEY FOR SUCCESS

by Rick Mooney

Larry Bird is a famous basketball player who is well known for his excellence as a free-thrower. In an aspect of the game in which an 80% average is considered outstanding, he consistently averages around 90%. Once, during a half-time interview, he was asked what his secret for success was. He answered that he practiced between 100 and 150 free-throws every day. This kind of repetition is evident in many sports. Baseball players take batting practice. Golfers go to the driving range. Tennis players practice serves. Runners work out strenuously to shave tenths of seconds from their times. Jumpers do the same thing for fractions of inches. These athletes practice these things not to learn how to do them (they are well beyond that stage), but to ingrain the necessary mental and physical skills until they are easy and automatic. By doing this, they make sure that in the pressure of a game, tournament, match or meet they will be able to perform consistently at the best of their ability.

The use of repetition as a tool to master mental concepts and physical skills appears daily in a child's school work. I still remember the brown paper with rows of three green lines (the outer two were solid, the middle one was dotted) upon which I painstakingly repeated each letter of the alphabet. Just think about how many times your child (or you in your day) did the following activities: addition, multiplication ("times tables"), spelling, flashcards, workbooks, etc. It should be noted that although these skills are important in and of themselves, they also have a direct bearing upon more advanced work. A student who does not learn to add will find multiplication impossible. Imagine a person who, in learning the alphabet, somehow did not learn about the letter "Q". That person would have the skills necessary to write this entire article so far, but would be in quite a quandary if required to spell the word "quiet".

A Key for Success (contd.)

In light of all this, I am often surprised at the groans and protests and looks of dismay and shock which greet a request to repeat something on the cello even as few as ten times a day! When I ask for repetition, it is not punishment; I am not angry or upset (not all the time, anyway). It is simply a requirement for learning. What is more, repetition does not have to be (indeed, should not be!) mindless, boring drudgery. Let me share some ideas with you which may be helpful in your own situation.

The teacher and parent can do many things to keep the necessary repetition interesting. The teacher may break down a single concept into many small exercises or games so that even though the same point is being learned it feels like many different activities. Also, since many pieces have the same teaching point built into them, the teacher can combine these pieces for learning and review in such a way that the same techniques appear in many different contexts. The parent can help by following through at home and being sure that things are done exactly as the teacher has outlined. Innovative ways to encourage repetition should be used (remember those school flashcards and workbooks?). Not every idea works for every child, and nothing works forever, but if the parent and teacher work creatively together, many clever ideas can be found.

Since the purpose of repetition is to increase a student's skill, the quality of that repetition is extremely important. I tell my students that practicing something incorrectly is worse than not practicing at all, because by practicing incorrectly, one learns a bad habit which must be unlearned later. Another aspect of this idea is that an assignment must continue to be repeated even after the student begins to play it correctly. The reason is that the goal is not simply correctness but complete mastery. Only when certain techniques are mastered to the point that they are easy

A Key for Success (contd.)

and automatic are they able to be utilized effectively by the student.

The good news in all of this is that careful repetition can set up a self-generating cycle: as the student repeats the assignment, it gets better and easier, and the student begins to feel a sense of accomplishment and reward, which makes him (or her) want to do it more, which makes it even better, etc.

The last and most important idea I'd like to share has to do with attitude. Repetition will not be drudgery if it is not approached as drudgery. In anything we learn, repetition is a necessary fact of life, so we should simply do it without making a big deal out of it. Many aspects of life are like this. If we don't want our teeth to rot and fall out of our heads, we brush them regularly -- period. Of course, this knowledge of cause and effect is very important. Before any of us puts out any effort on anything, we must be convinced that the results of our efforts will be important (and hopefully satisfying) to us. In music lessons, this is where reasonable goals come in. I don't think the goal should ever be to get on to the next piece. If this is the only goal, every minute spent on the current piece is filled with impatience and dissatisfaction. Instead, I feel the goal should be to do the current assignment at a very high quality level. If quality becomes the yardstick, then repetition can be rewarding and satisfying in and of itself. If students receive emotional rewards and positive feedback for the quality and carefulness of their work, even if it is a very small amount, they will respond to this concept. In other words, gratification and self-fulfillment must be achieved through the process of learning and not just the results.

FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS... BE JOYFUL FIRST!



FOR TEACHER'S AND PARENTS...BE JOYFUL FIRST!

DEVELOPING PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

By Sherese Bultman

“Let us begin to educate all children from the very day they are born. The fate of a child is in the hands of their [sic] parents. Every child has been born with high potentialities [sic]. The greatest duty, and the greatest joy given to us adults is the privilege of developing these potentialities and educating desirable human beings with beauty, harmonious minds, and high sensitivity.”

-Shinichi Suzuki

Whew! What a responsibility! As you sit and stare at the dirty dishes and your youngster tugs at you to help fix the latest toy, you probably wonder where you'll ever get the insight, let alone the energy to fulfill this awesome parental task. Relax – if you're a Suzuki parent, you're not only already on the right track, but you've also got some help. Notice Suzuki uses not only the word parents, but also adults in the above quote. That includes your Suzuki teacher and the resources of the entire School staff. We love your children too and want the above statement to be true for them as much as you do. Let's look at some ways we can help each other in this exciting endeavour.

We all know the parent plays an integral part in the Suzuki process. And so does the teacher. So we have the wonderful combination of two or three adults helping this one child to grow as a musician and person. The parent and the teacher are two separate and unique individuals, each of whom has their own strengths and weaknesses in dealing with and teaching this child. It only makes sense, therefore, that these two adults should be working together, communicating, cooperating to pool their strengths and insights, as well as hopefully canceling out their weaknesses.

Developing Parent/Teacher Communication (contd.)

Let's look at the most obvious strengths, both of which are integral to the Suzuki method. To put it simply, the two basic things we're working with are the child and the instrument. It's interesting to note that we have an expert in each of these fields, both of whom are (or should be) putting their expertise to work to help the child succeed. The key to a successful system is now the challenge of having these two experts help each other and pool their knowledge and ability to help the child learn as best they can. The teacher, obviously, is the instrumental expert: position, pieces, musicality, games, fingerings, and much more. We've been playing our instruments for about half of our lives thus far, some of us more, and are here to help you and your child.

You, as a parent, are the child expert (even though some days you may not feel like one). This role is equally important. You know your child inside and out, probably better than anyone else on this planet. You know when your child likes to practice and when he or she doesn't. You can think of special tricks as you interact daily with your child. You are with your child constantly and know best how to love him or her. That's a challenge and also a gift. Keep loving your child and letting your child know you love him or her even when the down bows are up bows, and the child wants to go out and play so much you think they don't even know there's an instrument in his or her hand.

Let's examine closely some ways we can share our expertise and communicate better with each other:

- Take notes in lessons. Remember taking notes in high school or college? This is no different. The teacher is communicating his or her expertise and you're going to have to take over as instrumental expert for the next six days. Take advantage of little helpful hints and write down the assignments and any of the spots the teacher works on. (Teachers don't always say, "Work on this," but everything worked on in lessons should also

be practiced at home.) It is also helpful to have the music in front of you, if you can read it, so you can mark directly in the music.

- Take notes in group classes. This is often a different teacher, and you just might catch the line that makes it click for your child or see a neat trick that will make practice more fun or easier at home. Don't forget, the group class teacher gives homework, too.
- Don't feel like taking notes? Try a recording device. Listening to the teacher and lesson at home might be an exciting new practice adventure (and the recordings are great entertainment 10 years down the line).
- Let the teacher be the expert during lessons – we only get a half hour each week. Save your suggestions for the kids for home.
- Suggestions for the teacher? Tell us. Again, these are best saved for a conference between the experts – slip us a note, give us a phone call, or write us an email. We need and love your suggestions and want to hear them.
- Even if it's gone beyond a suggestion and is now a serious concern, please talk with us. This definitely should be between parent and teacher alone – not at the lesson. Before you request a different teacher, talk directly with your current teacher. We can't always see everything you can and need to hear your concerns. Teachers are continuously trying to learn better ways to teach, so you need not see yourself as being critical but rather as collaborating with your teacher.
- Keep the continuity. The parent who goes to lessons should practice with the child. If someone else attends the lesson, be sure they record it for you and take careful notes.

Developing Parent/Teacher Communication (contd.)

- Go to the parent meetings. Keep informed and involved. Scheduling, tardiness, and absences. Inform your teacher in advance.
- Ask questions – about anything. Remember there is no such thing as a dumb question. Depending on the concentration level of the student, if you think of a question during the lesson, you may or may not want to ask it at that time. If the question involves what to do with your child during the practice sessions, be sure to ask before your lesson time is over. Keep a list of questions you think of at home and ask your teacher by phone or email.
- Be friends. We'll enjoy ourselves more, our child/student will love it and practice better for both of us, and it's lots more fun for everyone!



GROUP CLASSES AND GROWING INTO ADVANCED PROGRAMS

Throughout the child's study, Medley Music's deep commitment to ensemble playing is evident, through Suzuki style group classes and later through participation in FiddleJam and the Strathcona Symphony Orchestra (12 yrs+, audition required).

Group classes are used to reinforce concepts and repertoire introduced in private lessons. Depending on the level of the group, it may include such things as pre-Twinkle songs and instrumental position games, review of the Suzuki repertoire in an ensemble setting, an introduction to note-reading on the student's instrument, or playing Suzuki repertoire in multiple parts.

Purpose of group classes:

- To work on and reinforce techniques and musical concepts learned in the private lesson.
- To learn more advanced techniques through review of previously learned materials.
- To become musically flexible by accepting and reacting to different interpretations.
- To improve skills in following directions.
- To instill discipline in following the leader (orchestra preparation).
- To become a better audience.
- To learn to work together as a team.
- To learn from watching others play.
- To learn to offer constructive criticism in a positive environment.
- To provide a social and educational environment for motivation.
- To prepare for performances.
- TO HAVE FUN!

Role of the Parent at Group:

- To attend group lessons and take notes on techniques and musical concepts stressed.
- To practice with your child the ideas worked on in class.
- To arrive in plenty of time for class. Late arrivals mean stopping the entire class for tuning.
- To not distract your child's playing with gestures and critical looks.
- To discuss with your child the purposes of group class and what the appropriate behaviour should be.
- To step in and remove the child from the lesson if necessary due to the child's behaviour.

Role of the student:

- To be up to date on review pieces.
- To practice at home what was presented in the group class.
- To show respect for students, parents, and teachers.
- To listen to the teacher and react quickly to instructions.
- To remain in rest position while the teacher is talking.
- To sit and watch attentively while more advanced students are playing.
- To line up for tuning as soon as the instructor enters the room.
- To sit quietly on the floor after being tuned.
- To have all snacks consumed before class begins.

DR. SHINICHI SUZUKI 1898-1998

a biographical sketch



Shinichi Suzuki was born in Nagoya, Japan on October 17, 1898, the third of twelve children of prominent samurai parents. After the Japanese feudal system was abolished in 1871, many samurai found it difficult to provide a living for their families, so Shinichi's father, Masakichi, started a factory to produce shamisens, a three-stringed musical instrument.

When Japanese ports were closed to foreign trade in the 17th century, all western musical instruments were forbidden. In 1853 the ports reopened, but few foreign instruments were imported to Japan. At the home of a college professor, Masakichi happened to see a violin and received permission to take it home overnight. He made drawings of the instrument, and in the following year

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (contd.)

(1888), he sold his first violin. Twenty-two years later the Suzuki violin factory was producing 65,000 quality violins a year.

Since the factory was next door to their home, the Suzuki children virtually grew up there and often used discarded violins as toys. Shinichi didn't know what beautiful sounds a violin could make until one day he heard a recording of Mischa Elman. Elman's famous tone awakened Shinichi's desire to play the violin. His father, however, would not allow him to study the instrument, as it was considered beneath his station in life to become a performer. Masakichi felt that if his son wanted music, he should hire someone to play for him. So Shinichi taught himself.

After a traditional public school education, Shinichi attended a school of commerce so he could help in his father's business. While working in the factory, Shinichi fell ill and went to Okitsu for three months to recuperate. There he met the Yanagida family. Mr. Yanagida had been a schoolmate of Marquis Tokugawa. The Marquis was planning a biological expedition to the island of Chisima, and Mr. Yanagida arranged for Shinichi to join in. Also with the group was Nobu Koda, a renowned pianist, invited in honor of her brother, the first Japanese to set foot on Chisima. Shinichi brought his violin so he and Miss Koda played music daily. She and Marquis Tokugawa, a devotee of fine music, urged young Suzuki to study the violin seriously.

In 1921 the Marquis arranged for Suzuki to study in Germany, where he became a student of Professor Karl Klingler at the Berlin Conservatory. During his eight years there, Suzuki was befriended by Dr. Albert Einstein, who became his mentor. Einstein was an accomplished violinist and often held musical soirees in his home with friends who were prominent in various fields. All shared a love of music and were modest and loving human beings. Einstein taught Suzuki how musical training can

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (contd.)

sharpen one's perception in any area of learning. Einstein was only sixteen when he conceived his now famous theories of relativity. He later stated, "My discovery was the result of musical perception."

Suzuki was acutely aware of his own difficulty in learning the German language as an adult, while equally amazed at the ease with which German children conversed. He began to realize that children everywhere can speak their mother-tongues fluently and without failure. In 1929, he returned to Japan with his bride, Waltraud, and began his search to discover how children might use the way they learned their mother-tongue to master other difficult skills such as playing the violin.

World War II was a catastrophe for the entire world, including the Suzuki family. It was also a catalyst, however, for Suzuki's ideas on how to prevent future disasters through better ways to educate the world's children. Suzuki had great compassion for the innocent children who saw and suffered the appalling consequences of a war they had not asked for nor understood. He had no money, just a violin. So he played for every child he saw, not for profit, but to give them hope and a promise for the future. The Suzukis adopted a four-year-old orphan of the war, and Shinichi taught him how to play the violin, not by coercion and scolding, as had been the traditional way of teaching, but by love and listening to beautiful music.

Suzuki's idea of teaching peace and understanding by the mother-tongue method, using music as a tool, gradually gained acceptance. In the following fifty years, hundreds of thousands of loving and understanding parents and teachers in more than forty countries in Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa and the Americas have joined Dr. Suzuki's effort to nurture loving human beings through proper education and good music.

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (contd.)

Pablo Casals, a victim of war, prejudice and persecution himself, after hearing hundreds of Suzuki's students perform in an international concert in Tokyo, went to the stage, his eyes filled with tears and his voice shaking with emotion, and said:

"Ladies and gentlemen. I assist [sic] to one of the most moving scenes that one can see. What we are contemplating has much more significance than it seems. I don't think that in any country in the world we could feel such spirit of fraternity or cordiality in its utmost. I feel it in every moment I have had the privilege of being here. There is such a proof of heart, of desire for a better world.

"And what has impressed me most in this country has been the superlative desire of grown-up people to think of the smallest, like these, and to teach them noble feelings and noble deeds.

"One of these is music. To train them in music, to help them understand that music is not just a sound to dance to or have a fleeting pleasure, to teach them that music is such a high thing, and that perhaps it is music that will save the world."

Dr. Suzuki passed away on January 26, 1998 at his home in Matsumoto, Japan.

Summary of the Parents Role in Suzuki Music Lessons

Parents attending the lesson must take notes in order to properly implement exercises and help the child with assigned work. As Christine Goodner says, "the parents role is to be the secretary" (Beyond The Music Lesson). This includes keeping sheet music and handouts organized in a folder/binder.

If the child is old enough and it is appropriate, the parent is not required to stay for the full lesson, and they will come for the final 5-10 minutes to observe any new material learned in the lesson.

The day of the lesson, *parents should discuss practice notes with their child, and then **repeatedly** throughout the week to ensure that all practice is done properly and with the correct technique and posture.*

There are no exceptions to the note-taking rule. Learning an instrument is a huge undertaking for a student, and your child deserves your undivided attention for 30 minutes - try to stay engaged and off your phone!

Parents of children under 12, and all beginners, must be present during the home practice. At about 12 years of age, students may show the maturity to practice alone. This happens gradually, and until adulthood students should never be alone for 100% of their practices. **A parents role in the practice is to be the at-home teacher.**



The Suzuki Triangle is the relationship between the parent, student, and teacher. It is vital, in learning an instrument so young, that this support system is maintained, which is the key reason for so many requirements in the Suzuki Method. There is an open group of Suzuki teachers and parents chatting about practice problems and successes in the Facebook group **The Suzuki Triangle Community** - all are welcome to join.

CARE OF THE STRING INSTRUMENT

By James Butler

The string instrument is a sensitive and delicate instrument and requires care and attention in its use. Students should be taught from the beginning the proper care of their instrument.

The string instrument should not be subjected to extremes in temperature. Never leave a string instrument in a hot or cold car. The instrument is also adversely affected by a wide range in humidity levels. Extremely dry or damp conditions cause the wood and seams to expand or contract abnormally.

The bridge is quite fragile and is apt to crack if it is subjected to improper tuning procedures or if it is dropped. New students and their parents are advised to request tuning instructions from the teacher.

Always place your violin on its back, never on its strings/bridge, and do not pick up the violin by the strings, fingerboard, or pegs.

At no time should all four strings be loosened simultaneously because the sound post (inside the string instrument) is held in place only by the pressure of the strings on the bridge.

Do not touch the bow hairs with the fingers, since this leaves a residue of body oil that contributes to a poor sound and subsequent deterioration of the bow hair. Individual bow hairs will break with use; cut these carefully even with the tip or frog. Poor handling practices can accelerate this condition and, in time, make the bow unfit for use.



Loosen the bow hair after each use or the bow will warp. The bow is quite fragile at the tip and will break easily if dropped or misused. A broken bow cannot be repaired. Do not use polish of any kind on the string instrument or bow. Rosin dust that accumulates on the string instrument and strings can be cleaned by wiping gently with a clean soft cloth (as a diaper, scarf or similar lint-free material).

Label your case with your name, address and telephone. Do the same for your child's instrument. Write the size, brand name and serial number of your child's string instrument in a safe place at home for identification in case of loss.

Strings should not be considered permanent. With use, they stretch and lose their ability to resonate. There is no way to predict the life of a string. As a general rule, a yearly change of strings is recommended.

Tuning pegs, especially on small string instruments, tend to slip. If this is recurrent, the teacher will apply peg compound.

Do not attempt even minor repairs yourself. Contact the teacher whenever you feel there is a problem, so that the condition will not go uncorrected for an entire week of practice.

Always come to class with short nails! Not only will long nails damage your instrument, but will cause the fingers to press into the strings at the wrong angle, making it difficult to play quickly and in tune.

Recommended Reading List

Nurtured By Love - Schinichi Suzuki

The book that led the first generation of Suzuki students! A nice short read, this book outlines the building blocks of the Suzuki method.

Ability Development From Age Zero - Schinichi Suzuki

Another work by Suzuki, this book delves into the question of nature vs. nurture. Suzuki's stance on the matter is well known, and while sometimes heavy handed, Suzuki is honest and to the point.

Beyond The Music Lesson - Christine Goodner

This book is perfect for 21st century parents. While *Nurtured By Love* comes from the author of the Suzuki method himself, it was first published post World War II. *Beyond The Music Lesson* is written for modern day families with modern day problems and solutions.

Positive Practice - Christine Goodner

This is the perfect workbook for busy families who find it difficult to practice effectively. It will walk you through the steps of practicing while simultaneously helping you to become a stronger at-home teacher.

Helping Parents Practice - Edmund Sprunger

This is the ultimate handbook in practicing without conflict. While rooted in the Suzuki method, Edmund Sprunger discusses everything from games and practice ideas, to how to speak to your child in a way that they will respond positively while executing intricate and difficult tasks.

Resources

DROPBOX

On medleymusic.ca under “Student Resources”. Registered students will be provided the password.

Youtube

Channel name: Daisy Melville

Violin Supplies

- Cindy Budd (cinfid@shaw.ca)
- sharmusic.com
- sheetmusicplus.com
- Long and McQuade (violin rentals)

Violin repairs

- Cindy Budd (cinfid@shaw.ca) - Rentals and repairs
- Pat Hogan (ask for contact info) - Complex repairs