

## Summary of Dr. Suzuki's Philosophy

The method of music instruction developed by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki is modeled after the natural development of language abilities in children. Noting that every child picks up the multi-faceted task of speaking his or her own native language, the noted Japanese violinist and teacher instituted a program for teaching the violin to very young children which is built upon the "Mother Tongue Method." The foundation of the Suzuki approach is based on the following:

- 1) Environment. The environment in which a child is brought up immensely influences the child's behavior and abilities as he or she grows. Instead of referring to a child's "talent," which is an innate ability, the belief that every child can learn and develop his or her talent is discussed as "ability development." Parents and those around the child can change the environment to reflect behaviors and abilities that are desired.
- 2) Parental Involvement. Parents are crucial to the development of their child. Positive feedback, providing examples and setting a structure toward consistent learning are the foundation that parents must model for a child's learning environment. By attending a "Parent Class" and learning the fundamentals of the instrument themselves, parents serve as teachers at home as well as examples for the child to mimic during daily practice. Along with the teacher, parent and student work together to provide a consistently positive environment for child development.
- 3) Early Instruction. Infant and early childhood studies show that music appreciation is developed even earlier than most of us realize. Muscle control and concentration skills are easily developed at an early age and the discipline of working on a specific task carries throughout the child's life. Suzuki formulated his approach to playing the violin around his

theories of language development, which, of course, begins with very young children. Just as they can grasp the intricacies of speaking their native language, children have the capacity to absorb vast amounts of information and learn finer motor skills before they reach the age of five.

- 4) Encouragement. As with language development, Suzuki bases much of the positive reinforcement of the steps of learning to play on the excited encouragement of parents and teachers. Parents provide immediate feedback as a child learns to speak his or her first words; this same approach results in successful music instruction. The encouragement of peers also plays an important role in the Suzuki approach, as consistent group settings and peer modeling provide a forum for student to student interaction.
- 5) Listening. Children learn early to communicate by imitating the sounds and gestures of those around them. This same process is applied to music instruction by daily listening to the music to be learned. By listening consistently, the child is motivated to mimic the tone and quality of the recordings, and has a foundation on which to base learning the entire song. Listening to live performances enriches the child's ability to compare and contrast styles and literature, and is a positive complement to the Suzuki literature listening requirements.
- 6) Structured Learning System. By providing a structured, ordered presentation of literature, students (and their parents) are introduced to a limited number of new ideas to work through. Each lesson builds upon the previous skills and adds another level of ideas.
- 7) Student Individual Pace. The order of lessons and constant repetition of learned works demand the mastery of skills before the next challenge is met. By concentrating on the individual abilities of each student, the program moves along at the student's pace. Ensuring

that the student has mastered a skill provides a firm foundation on which new techniques can be introduced in a non-threatening way.

- 8) Reading. Just as a child learns to speak before he or she begins to read the language, music students are encouraged to learn the rudiments of playing the instrument before delving into the symbolism of reading printed music. As a child develops, note reading is introduced at a level and speed appropriate for the individual student.
- 9) Individuality. Suzuki stressed that music instruction is not meant to only produce great musicians, but to develop a more complete individual. By moving the instruction at a varied pace for each student, and developing the abilities of each child, the music student learns the rewards of patience, perseverance and discipline which are applied to his or her future goals and interests.