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ESSAYS IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE SUZUKI METHOD

by

KARA EUBANKS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

City University of New York

2014

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of  
the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

### ESSAYS IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE SUZUKI METHOD

by

Kara Eubanks

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This dissertation speaks to an audience of string pedagogues inside and outside the Suzuki community to offer a richer understanding of how the Suzuki Method fits into American educational and string-pedagogical practice.

The first chapter presents a history of the Suzuki Method and the current global state of Suzuki theory and practice. This introductory chapter frames the two chapters that follow; it provides the background information necessary to understand them. The second and third chapters each address an aspect of the Suzuki Method that is widely misunderstood by the string-pedagogy community, including the Suzuki community itself. While chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation can be understood as free-standing essays, their topics have been carefully chosen to complement and intersect with each other.

Chapter 2 examines the Suzuki Method's cultural relationship to Japanese and Western educational traditions. Taking a historical look at Suzuki's philosophy and pedagogy, this chapter aims to correct an unbalanced view that circulates in the American music-education and Suzuki communities about the appropriate social and cultural contexts for Suzuki's pedagogy, namely the view that the Suzuki Method's Japanese origins preclude an affinity with American educational norms. This chapter examines previously undiscussed elements in Suzuki's

intellectual and cultural biography, and it illuminates the fact that Suzuki had extensive exposure to American and European Progressive educational traditions, which were prevalent in Japan during Suzuki's formative years. With new evidence about Suzuki's intellectual biography in hand, it becomes possible to re-examine elements of Suzuki's educational philosophy to show that the Suzuki Method has organic affinities with Western educational theories and methods. Unlike previous research which has attributed Suzuki's philosophy and certain of Suzuki's pedagogical devices to an exclusively Japanese mindset, this chapter suggests that Suzuki's pedagogy has an important relationship with Western Progressivism. This chapter is intended to encourage readers to re-consider their perceptions about the appropriate social and cultural contexts for the Suzuki Method.

Chapter 3 addresses how the Suzuki Method's technique-instructional methods relate to traditional European-based string pedagogy. This chapter illustrates the philosophical and practical contrasts between the two educational approaches, and it argues that a causal link exists between each school's philosophy and methods. The chapter begins with a discussion, then it demonstrates through three sample paths to technical competencies how each school might carry out their technique-instructional methods. While it is commonly understood that the Suzuki Method teaches technique through music, and traditional European-based methods teach technique through exercises and etudes, this chapter fills gaps in understanding about what it means to teach technique through music or etudes, why traditional teaching uses etudes and Suzuki does not, and how using one approach or another reflects certain philosophical stances about the nature of talent and the inherent difficulty of music performance.

Together, the three chapters offer to enrich string pedagogues' understanding of how the Suzuki Method fits into Western educational and string-pedagogical culture, both philosophically and practically.

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# **CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT TRENDS IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE SUZUKI METHOD**

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Due to the prevalence of the Suzuki Method in America, string players and pedagogues inside and outside the Suzuki community necessarily encounter the Suzuki Method to one extent or another. Many young and middle-aged American string players were educated through the Suzuki Method from pre-school age through their entrance into conservatory as teenagers. Older generations of players and teachers were introduced to the method through personal contact with Shin'ichi Suzuki, while others learned of the method from media images and word-of-mouth reputation as the method rose in popularity. Many string players began their studies through traditional, European-based methods and either by chance or choice transferred into a Suzuki program, and many players did the reverse. Even at the professional level, many non-Suzuki teachers have discovered the Suzuki Method, become trained, and re-labeled themselves "Suzuki teachers." Other non-Suzuki teachers have become familiar with the Suzuki Method, gone through teacher education, and rejected Suzuki pedagogy in favor of traditional methods.

Suzuki's approach has a reputation for being "different," and it is. The Suzuki Method teaches children to play by ear and by imitation, rather than by reading (in the beginning stages). The method also insists that parents be heavily involved in their children's education: Parents must attend every lesson and teach their children daily at home, in addition to providing an immersive musical environment outside of practice and lesson time. The Suzuki Method aims to motivate and engage young children by teaching through games; by never forcing children to practice or rehearse against their will; and by creating a social educational structure so children

can learn and perform with their peers. In addition to private lessons, Suzuki students take regular group lessons, which are either integrated or separated into “technique classes” and “repertoire classes.” Famously, Suzuki students perform the Suzuki Method graded repertoire in large groups, in unison.

The Suzuki Method is also known for learning technique through repertoire and for its rejection of the canonical etude sequence used by traditional instructors. Rather, by the Suzuki approach, theory and practice are combined. Suzuki teachers teach technique through the pieces in the Suzuki repertoire, which have been designed to advance in a linear way.

But perhaps the biggest difference between the Suzuki Method and traditional teaching comes from Suzuki’s claim that “all children have talent.” His method was overtly reactionary to traditional methods in this regard. Suzuki spoke out against the traditional attitude that “nothing can be done about a lack of inborn ability.”<sup>1</sup> He stated, “I have spent some thirty years proving a method about which it can truly be said, ‘Look, advanced ability can be nurtured in any child. With this method wonderful ability can be developed, but with some other method, some children will become miserable human beings with little ability.’ The result is that today I can say, ‘Talent is not inborn.’”<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the concrete differences between the Suzuki Method and traditional approaches, the method has also gained a particular reputation for being “different” because of

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<sup>1</sup> Shin’ichi Suzuki, *Ability Development from Age Zero*, trans. Mary Louise Nagata (Secaucus, NJ: Suzuki Method International, Summy–Birchard, 1981), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 1. For evidence of traditional pedagogical attitudes toward the innate nature of talent, the separation of technique from music, and the responsibilities of teacher and student, see Carl Flesch, *The Art of Violin Playing: Artistic Realization and Instruction*, trans. Frederick H. Martens (Boston: C. Fischer, 1930), 129–33; Elizabeth A. H. Green, *Miraculous Teacher: Ivan Galamian and the Meadowmount Experience* (Ann Arbor, MI: Elizabeth A. H. Green, 1993), 99; Leopold Auer, *Violin Playing as I Teach It* (New York: Dover Publications, 1980), 7; Franz Wohlfahrt, *Sixty Studies for the Violin, Op. 45* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1905), preface.

its cultural origins. Aside from the Suzuki Method, the dominant violin-pedagogical traditions have come from Europe. Conservatory methods from Russia, Germany, Belgium, and France between mid-18<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries propagated technical and philosophical approaches that have now amalgamized to an extent where national traditions are hardly recognizable in American playing and teaching (a full discussion of the term “traditional teaching” can be found in Chapter 3). This amalgamation can be conveniently referred to as the “traditional approach.” Traditional pedagogy is often contrasted with Suzuki not only because of the practical differences between the two, but because of the respective Western and Eastern origins.

Because the Suzuki Method is of non-European origin, and because of the procedural and philosophical differences between the Suzuki Method and traditional string pedagogy, American string players and pedagogues have considered questions about the appropriateness of the Suzuki Method in the context of American education and culture, and about the equivalencies, strengths, or deficiencies of the Suzuki Method relative to traditional teaching.

The purpose of this dissertation is, broadly, to examine the Suzuki Method’s relationship to Western and American educational theories and American culture, and specifically, to examine the relationship between American Suzuki practices and methods practiced by American traditional teachers. Chapter 2 examines these broad cultural considerations. This chapter deals with the Suzuki Method’s cultural relationship to Japanese and Western educational traditions. In dialogue with numerous publications that examine the cultural and social appropriateness of the Suzuki Method in America, this chapter incorporates heretofore neglected information from Suzuki’s cultural and intellectual biography to re-examine the method in relation to Western educational practices. This chapter reveals that the Suzuki Method has deeper affinities with Western educational practices than was previously understood, in particular between the Suzuki

Method and what has been called the Progressive tradition in Western Education. Chapter 3 deals with practical procedural aspects of technique instruction by the Suzuki Method and by the traditional approach, and it illuminates a parallel between each school's philosophy and methods. Through discussion and through close analyses of teaching procedures, the third chapter fills gaps in understanding about what it means to teach technique through music or etudes, why traditional teaching uses etudes and Suzuki does not, and how using one approach or another reflects certain philosophical stances about the nature of talent and the inherent difficulty of music performance.

For readers not yet familiar with the Suzuki approach to violin training, Chapter 1 offers the requisite background to absorb the content in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 will serve different goals for Suzuki insiders and Suzuki outsiders. For those unfamiliar with the Suzuki Method, Chapter 2 will encourage readers to reassess their perceptions of the Suzuki Method, which may be based on collected observations or word-of-mouth information. For readers of Chapter 2 who participate in Suzuki Talent Education, this chapter offers new historical information not previously found in research into Suzuki pedagogy. In Chapter 2, historical information about early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese education will challenge readers' beliefs about the development of the Suzuki Method and will encourage readers to reassess their interpretations of Suzuki's written words and of previous Suzuki scholarship. In Chapter 3, both Suzuki and traditional educators will gain a new perspective on their own approach and on the other by gaining an enriched understanding of the connection between philosophy and methods, and by gaining a more nuanced understanding of each approach's teaching procedures.

Certain background information is required to understand and contextualize the two chapters that follow this introduction. First, the reader should have an understanding of how and when

Shin'ichi Suzuki developed his Method. Second, the reader should understand how the Suzuki Method grew from a single teacher's approach in Matsumoto, Japan, to the widespread method it is today. Third, because this dissertation deals with the relative cultural significance of various features of the Suzuki Method, the reader must understand the global dynamics of the Suzuki Method. Readers must have a basic understanding of how the Suzuki Method is variously unified and/or independent between countries, in particular between the United States and Japan. Finally, the reader needs a basic understanding of the philosophical and pedagogical principles of the Suzuki Method and an understanding of the types of and trends in Suzuki-related publications.

### ***BIOGRAPHY OF SHIN'ICHI SUZUKI***

Japanese violinist Shin'ichi Suzuki was born in 1898 in Nagoya, Japan. According to biographies by Evelyn Hermann and Ray Landers, Suzuki's father owned a violin factory, but ironically, neither he nor his siblings ever studied the violin. At seventeen, Shin'ichi became enamored with the sound of the violin through a recording of Schubert's *Ave Maria*. Immediately, he acquired a violin and began teaching himself by repeatedly listening to and imitating that recording.

After several years of independent learning, Suzuki began formal violin studies in Tokyo. At age 23, he moved to Germany and studied for several years with violinist Karl Klingler. While in Germany, Suzuki married German pianist and soprano Waltraud Prange. Soon after marrying, Shin'ichi and Waltraud moved to Japan.

Suzuki returned to Japan in the late 1920s, and thus began his teaching career. Suzuki always had had a love for children, and as he began teaching violin he developed an interest in how children learn. With some experience and observation of children's development, Suzuki formed

his personal pedagogical theory.<sup>3</sup>

Suzuki observed that children, almost without exception, master their native languages easily and willingly, through daily interaction with their parents and peers. This observation of language acquisition led Suzuki to challenge the status quo in music education, which was the belief that musical talent is rare. He argued that any child who could develop fluency in their native language possessed the ability to also perform music at a high level. Not only did Suzuki reject the belief that talent was rare, he also argued against the idea that talent was inborn. He stated that languages are difficult to learn, but that language learning had a perfect success rate because environments are perfectly educative. He noticed that language learning was immersive and imitative. He noticed that children enjoy imitating their parents and other children, that they enjoy repetition of new words and syllables, and that language learning is free of criticism and full of praise and encouragement. Further, he noticed that children executed difficult pronunciations and comprehended grammar without any exercises, abstract explanations, or direct instruction.<sup>4</sup>

Suzuki patterned his music education methods after the language acquisition process, and named his method the “mother-tongue approach.” Just as with language learning, Suzuki’s method began educating children from infancy with immersive listening. His approach incorporated parent and peer interaction; employed positive reinforcement and avoided criticism; required parent and child to engage together in regular, daily music practice; featured copious repetition of new skills; and insisted that learning take place small, linear steps, never advancing

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<sup>3</sup> Evelyn Hermann, *Shin'ichi Suzuki: The Man and His Philosophy* (Athens, OH: Ability Development Associates, 1981); Ray Landers, *The Talent Education School of Shin'ichi Suzuki, An Analysis: Application of Its Philosophy and Methods to All Areas of Instruction* (Chicago: Daniel Press, 1981), 1–4.

<sup>4</sup> Shin'ichi Suzuki, *Young Children's Talent Education and Its Method*, trans. Kyoko Selden (Secaucus, NJ: Summy-Birchard, 1996), 9–21.

to a new skill before the previous skill was mastered and fluent. Suzuki posited that this approach would provide music students with the same confidence, ease, and motivation they experience in learning their native languages.

In addition to Suzuki's early-formed beliefs about skill development, Suzuki held strong beliefs about the purpose of education. After seeing the destruction and international distrust sparked by World War II, Suzuki began to believe that music education could serve to promote world peace. He believed that music education was a forum where character, interpersonal sensitivity, and an attitude of social service could be fostered in children. Because music serves as an international language, he believed that from a young age, children could connect with and feel kinship with others across national and racial lines, and that his students would develop a spirit that discouraged divisions and war.<sup>5</sup>

Having codified his educational philosophy and methods, during the 1960s–80s Suzuki published numerous books and articles explaining and promoting his method. Seminal works from this era include *Young Children's Talent and Its Education*, *Ability Development from Age Zero*, and *Nurtured by Love*. Many of his speeches and essays from this period have also been published, which explain and promote his educational perspective.<sup>6</sup>

The Suzuki Method gained international popularity, and Suzuki was recognized with numerous honors and awards. In 1970, he received a gold medal of the Order of the Rising Sun, a Japanese award given to individuals who make significant contributions in the areas of

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<sup>5</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> See Suzuki, *Ability Development*; Shin'ichi Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love: The Classical Approach to Talent Education*, trans. Waltraud Suzuki (Princeton: Summy-Birchard, 1983); Shin'ichi Suzuki, *Shin'ichi Suzuki: His Speeches and Essays* (Miami: Warner Bros. Publications, 1998); Shin'ichi Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep: The Writings of Shin'ichi Suzuki*, trans. Kyoko Selden (St. Louis: Talent Education Journal, 1982); Suzuki, *Young Children's Talent Education* (Secaucus, NJ: Summy-Birchard, 1996).



international relations and the promotion of Japanese culture. He was recognized by Rotary International for “the furtherance of better understanding and of friendly relations between peoples of the world.”<sup>7</sup> Suzuki was also awarded honorary doctorates by five American universities: New England Conservatory (1966); University of Louisville (1967); Eastman School of Music (1972); Oberlin Conservatory (1984); and Cleveland Institute of Music (1990). Suzuki’s highest honor came in 1993, five years before his death, when he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. In 1998, Suzuki died at the age of 99 in Matsumoto, Japan.<sup>8</sup>

### ***HISTORY AND GROWTH OF THE SUZUKI METHOD***

The Suzuki Method drew immediate attention with the success of Suzuki’s first young students. Suzuki began teaching three-year-old Koji Toyoda in 1936. By 1940, the seven-year-old gave a public recital in Tokyo which earned reviews entitled “Brilliant,” “Wonderful,” and “A Genius Appears,” by major Tokyo newspapers.<sup>9</sup> Toyoda went on to win numerous international competitions and later served as concertmaster of the Berlin Radio-Philharmonic Orchestra.

Toshiya Eto, who also began studies in the 1930s with Suzuki, went on to study at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and performed as a soloist at Carnegie Hall before accepting a faculty position in Tokyo, where he became the teacher of famous violinists Akiko Suwanai and Mariko Senju.<sup>10</sup> Kenji Kobayashi began studies with Suzuki in 1940, gave his first public recital in 1942 at age 8. He went on to a solo career, performing with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra at age 19, and performing recitals throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States before taking a

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<sup>7</sup> Hermann, *Man and His Philosophy*, 59.

<sup>8</sup> Waltraud Suzuki, *My Life with Suzuki* ([Secaucus, NJ]: Summy-Birchard, 1987), 68.

<sup>9</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> “Obituary: Toshiya Eto,” *The Japan Times*, 23 January 2008, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2008/01/23/national/obituary-toshiya-eto/#.UzgmjtyrDk8>.

position as concertmaster of the Tokyo Philharmonic. Subsequently, Kobayashi had a successful chamber music career, beginning with performances at the renowned Marlboro Festival and a faculty position at the famed Taos Chamber Music Festival in Taos, New Mexico. Kobayashi later became the first violinist of the New Arts String Quartet, and currently serves as a faculty member at Tokyo University of Arts and Music.<sup>11</sup>

Building on the success of his first students, Suzuki's student enrollment grew and he established the Matsumoto Music School in 1946. In addition to teaching young students, Suzuki also taught teachers how to teach using his method, and those teachers spread Suzuki's approach throughout Japan. In 1950, the Talent Education Research Institute was founded to organize and regulate use of the Suzuki Method. TERI, as it is known, was authorized by the Japanese Ministry of Education and has grown to a body of 1,400 teachers and 20,000 students in Japan.

Suzuki's Method spread to the United States in 1958,<sup>12</sup> when Japanese violinist Kenjy Mochizuki came to the United States to study at the Oberlin conservatory and brought with him a video of 750 young Suzuki students playing concertos by Bach and Vivaldi in unison.<sup>13</sup> American professors Clifford Cook, John Kendall, and Robert Klotman (who later became president of the Music Educators National Conference),<sup>14</sup> saw this video and went on to travel to Japan to study the Suzuki Method and enroll in teacher training with Suzuki himself. The Suzuki Method was further popularized in 1964 by a national tour of a group of Suzuki's students from Japan, and between 1965 and 1970, Suzuki workshops took place at Oberlin Conservatory and

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<sup>11</sup> *The 16<sup>th</sup> Suzuki Method World Convention*, "Faculty," accessed 28 April 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Garson, *Suzuki Twinkles: An Intimate Portrait* (Secaucus, NJ: Summy-Birchard, 2001), 139.

<sup>13</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> "Robert H. Klotman: Obituary," *The New York Times*, 9 February 2012, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/nytimes/obituary.aspx?pid=155805628>.

Eastman School of Music.<sup>15</sup> During the 1970s, the Suzuki Method also gained popularity in the United Kingdom, Canada, France, West Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Australia, and Japan. The Suzuki Association of the Americas was founded in 1972,<sup>16</sup> and by 1973 the Suzuki Association had 100,000 registered Suzuki students in the United States.<sup>17</sup> The International Suzuki Association was established in 1983 as a coalition of regional Suzuki Associations from around the world. Today, the International Suzuki Association is the parent organization to five regional Suzuki Associations, which include the Australian National Council of Suzuki Talent Education Association, the Suzuki Association of the Americas, the European Suzuki Association (which represents Europe, Africa, and the Middle East), the Asia Suzuki Association, and the Talent Education Research Institute in Japan. Each of the five major regional organizations coordinates national and state-level Suzuki Associations.<sup>18</sup>

Currently, the Suzuki Method is practiced in 38 countries and has over 400,000 children enrolled. Most of the students enrolled in Suzuki education are represented by Japan and the United States, which have approximately 20,000 and 300,000 students enrolled, respectively.<sup>19</sup>

### ***SUZUKI TEACHER REGULATION AND TRAINING***

Techniques and pedagogical devices are not regulated by the International Suzuki Association, nor by any regional Suzuki Association. Individuals become registered Suzuki teachers after a process of teacher training offered by regional Suzuki associations. Teachers are educated in the

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<sup>15</sup> Garson, *Twinkles*, 139.

<sup>16</sup> “About the Suzuki Association of the Americas,” Suzuki Association of the Americas, accessed 14 March 2014, <https://suzukiassociation.org/about>.

<sup>17</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> “About the ISA,” International Suzuki Association, accessed 14 March 2014, <http://internationalsuzuki.org/about.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> “‘Talent Education’ Expands throughout the World,” and “The History of the ‘Talent Education Research Institute.’” Talent Education Research Institute, accessed 14 March 2014, [http://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/E\\_mthd121.html](http://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/E_mthd121.html).

philosophical approach to the Suzuki Method, and in teaching practices that reflect Suzuki's language-learning analogy. Teachers are educated in how to educate and incorporate parents in Suzuki education, and they are taught how to teach through the social structure of Suzuki group classes. They also receive instruction on how to cater to students' individual pace and motivation. Teacher trainees learn the meticulous progression of each technique as it advances through the Suzuki Method repertoire; each piece has one or more purposes in advancing a student's technique and musicianship, and this education makes it possible for teachers to use the Suzuki repertoire effectively. Individual techniques, such as bow grip and shifting, are left to individual teachers to teach as they see fit. Teachers share ideas and methods through teacher training seminars, teacher workshops, conferences, and summer institutes.

Internationally, Suzuki teachers share ideas at bi-annual International Suzuki Conventions in Matsumoto and at bi-annual International Suzuki-Method Research Symposia in the United States. At these conventions, Suzuki teachers work cooperatively to teach mixed groups of Suzuki students in group lessons, to teach individual lessons of children from other Suzuki regions, and Suzuki teachers from across the globe meet to share teaching innovations and ideas. The success of these national and international conventions shows that while Suzuki teachers are not governed to teach uniformly, that Suzuki teachers work cooperatively to find best practices in Suzuki education. Suzuki teachers are united by a shared commitment to the Suzuki philosophy and a commitment to regular sharing of ideas. This model results in companionable training by Suzuki teachers across the globe, though one would not find uniformity in approaches from teacher to teacher.

## ***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE JAPANESE AND AMERICAN SUZUKI ASSOCIATIONS***

Chapter 2 of this dissertation will focus on perceptions by American musicians and educators of the cultural paradigms represented in Suzuki's pedagogy, and part of that perception includes a belief that Japanese educational approaches are in many ways mutually exclusive with American approaches. Therefore, in advance of reading Chapter 2, readers should understand the relative degrees of independence and interdependence of the Japanese and American Suzuki Associations, as well as the relative similarities and differences between the Suzuki Method in Japan and America.

The Japanese Talent Education Research Institute and the American Suzuki Association share membership in the International Suzuki Association. They share a commitment to Suzuki's philosophy, as well as a commitment to ongoing improvement and innovation in teaching methods by Suzuki teachers. The Japanese Talent Education Research Institute does not govern the American Suzuki Association, nor vice versa.

Japanese and American Suzuki schools interact independently from one another, and over the years, American teachers have frequently remarked that the Suzuki Method is practiced, to a degree, differently in Japan than in the United States. Craig Timmerman noticed this phenomenon as early as the 1980s in his book, *Journey Down the Kreisler Highway*, and observations of differing practices have been made as recently as the last International Suzuki Convention in 2013, by renowned Suzuki teacher Edward Kreitman.<sup>20</sup> Timmerman noted differences in the practice of the Suzuki Method due to cultural filtrations of Suzuki's

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<sup>20</sup> Edward Kreitman, "Final Thoughts from the 16th World Convention," Suzuki Association of the Americas News Blog, 31 March 2013, <https://suzukiassociation.org/news/guest-blog-final-thoughts-from-16th-world/>.

statements, and Kreitman remarked that the Japanese have a different approach to teaching beginners than Americans (Kreitman is well-known for his expertise with beginning students).

Japanese and American Suzuki students are educated similarly enough that they regularly participate in mixed classes at international Suzuki conferences and institutes, but they present themselves differently enough for teachers such as Timmerman and Kreitman to publish their thoughts on the nuances of each culture's interpretation of the method. Below is a side-by-side presentation by the Japanese and American Suzuki Associations on their websites, which are intended to inform prospective students' parents of the Suzuki philosophy and approach.

#### **THE SUZUKI METHOD, AS PRESENTED BY THE JAPANESE AND AMERICAN SUZUKI ASSOCIATION WEBSITES**

<b>Japanese Talent Education Research Institute<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>Suzuki Association of the Americas<sup>22</sup></b>
<p><b>Every child can be educated.</b> All parents know that their child can learn their native language. This ability to master their mother tongue allows parents to nurture and encourage their children with confidence and infinite affection. They realize that this is not an acquired knowledge but an ability inborn in all human beings.</p> <p><b>Learning begins the day a child is born.</b> A child who is raised from a very young age with love and attention will develop more successfully than a child whose education begins at the traditional "school age". Parents are experts in their own language and feel comfortable</p>	<p><b>Every Child Can Learn</b> More than fifty years ago, Japanese violinist Shin'ichi Suzuki realized the implications of the fact that children the world over learn to speak their native language with ease. He began to apply the basic principles of language acquisition to the learning of music, and called his method the mother-tongue approach. The ideas of parent responsibility, loving encouragement, constant repetition, etc., are some of the special features of the Suzuki approach.</p> <p><b>Parent Involvement</b> As when a child learns to talk, parents are involved in the musical learning of their child. They attend lessons with the child and serve as "home teachers" during the week. One parent often learns to play before the child, so that s/he understands what the child is expected to do. Parents work with the teacher</p>

<sup>21</sup> "The Basic Principles of the Suzuki Method Using the Mother Tongue Approach," Talent Education Research Institute, accessed 14 March 2014, [http://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/E\\_mthd112.html](http://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/E_mthd112.html).

<sup>22</sup> "About the Suzuki Method," Suzuki Association of the Americas, accessed 14 March 2014, <https://suzukiassociation.org/teachers/twinkler/>.

teaching their mother tongue to their children. Such an accomplished teacher fosters only the highest ability in their students.

**“Intuition” is a very important principle of talent education.**

One of the most fully developed abilities of human beings is intuition, without it we could not learn our mother tongue so successfully. A mother speaks kindly to her child from the first day. Her smile and warmth in conjunction with her spoken words develops the child’s language ability. If a child was spoken to without the love and warmth but with hard, written letters instead, would the child be able to learn to speak his mother tongue ? This is why there is no textbook required for a child to learn his native language.

**Never force children to practice or rehearse.**

Parents never get angry with their children when they are not able to speak fluently. In this positive environment, children can develop without inhibition. A language has never been learned through the use of the command “study hard”. Is this not an ideal state of education ? Given a nurturing environment, children will develop their own language ability. Children enjoy speaking and will practice everyday amongst themselves. Through play with older children, the younger ones expand their vocabulary and are encouraged to develop their abilities.

**Human ability develops through practice and exercise.**

Repetition and rehearsal every day prepares a child to move on to the next level of ability. Through repetition a child gradually becomes an expert in his mother tongue.

Why is it necessary to practice every day?

to create an enjoyable learning environment.

**Early Beginning**

The early years are crucial for developing mental processes and muscle coordination. Listening to music should begin at birth; formal training may begin at age three or four, but it is never too late to begin.

**Listening**

Children learn words after hearing them spoken hundreds of times by others. Listening to music every day is important, especially listening to pieces in the Suzuki repertoire so the child knows them immediately.

**Repetition**

Constant repetition is essential in learning to play an instrument. Children do not learn a word or piece of music and then discard it. They add it to their vocabulary or repertoire, gradually using it in new and more sophisticated ways.

**Encouragement**

As with language, the child’s effort to learn an instrument should be met with sincere praise and encouragement. Each child learns at his/her own rate, building on small steps so that each one can be mastered. Children are also encouraged to support each other’s efforts, fostering an attitude of generosity and cooperation.

**Learning with Other Children**

In addition to private lessons, children participate in regular group lessons and performance at which they learn from and are motivated by each other.

**Graded Repertoire**

Children do not practice exercises to learn to talk, but use language for its natural purpose of communication and self-expression. Pieces in the Suzuki repertoire are designed to present technical problems to be learned in the context of the music rather than through dry technical exercises.

**Delayed Reading**

Children learn to read after their ability to talk has been well established. In the same way, children should develop basic technical competence on their instruments before being taught to read music.

Are Suzuki Kids Prodigies?

Memory is patterned and developed every day through constant repetition and positive reinforcement. Through observing the process in which children master their mother tongue, we see the necessity of repetition. A one year old child can speak only a few words but in only a few short years the same child can use his mother tongue fluently. It is an amazing amount of progress in a short period of time. Education, which does not bring about such success is a failure.

**Children need to feel confident in their abilities and thoroughly master what they are learning.**

This is the most important thing to keep students from giving up. At first, they learn a simple skill carefully and repeat it again and again. Only after they have learned it thoroughly and been able to perform it enough for them to move on to the next step, will a child feel it now “easy”. The mother tongue approach can be used in other studies. Music is just one of the many fields that can benefit from the use of talent education. The concert performed by children is an example of how the approach can be used in music.

Are Suzuki students musical geniuses? Are they ‘gifted’ children who have a special talent for music? Are their parents professional musicians?

Fortunately, Suzuki students are normal children whose parents may have little or no musical experience. Their parents have simply chosen to introduce them to music through the Suzuki approach, a unique philosophy of music education developed by Shin’ichi Suzuki.

**The Suzuki Legacy**

Shin’ichi Suzuki was a violinist, educator, philosopher and humanitarian. Born in 1898, he studied violin in Japan for some years before going to Germany in the 1920s for further study. After the end of World War II, Dr. Suzuki devoted his life to the development of the method he calls Talent Education. Suzuki based his approach on the belief that “Musical ability is not an inborn talent but an ability which can be developed. Any child who is properly trained can develop musical ability, just as all children develop the ability to speak their mother tongue. The potential of every child is unlimited.”

**How does Talent Education differ from other methods of teaching music to children?**

Thoughtful teachers have often used some of the elements listed here, but Suzuki has formulated them in a cohesive approach. Some basic differences are: Suzuki teachers believe that musical ability can be developed in all children.

Students begin at young ages.

Parents play an active role in the learning process. Children become comfortable with the instrument before learning to read music.

Technique is taught in the context of pieces rather than through dry technical exercises.

Pieces are refined through constant review.

Students perform frequently, individually and in groups.



## ***RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS ABOUT THE SUZUKI METHOD IN THE UNITED STATES, 1960S–PRESENT***

American publications on the Suzuki Method have experienced several trends in the fifty-five years that the Suzuki Method has been present in the United States. These trends primarily reflect the growth and increasing establishment of the Suzuki Method as a prevalent music education method.

The first trend in Suzuki publishing in American featured explanations of the Suzuki Method, such as Suzuki's collaborative work with Elizabeth Mills and Therese Cecile Murphy, *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*,<sup>23</sup> and Evelyn Hermann's *Shin'ichi Suzuki: The Man and His Philosophy*.<sup>24</sup> English translations of Suzuki's own explanations of his philosophy and methods, including *Nurtured by Love, Ability Development from Age Zero*, and *Where Love Is Deep* from the early 1980s.

Alongside explanatory works on the theory and practice of the Suzuki Method, a second trend in Suzuki publication was made up of professional commentary focusing on the implications of adopting a Japanese pedagogical approach in American society. Seminal works in this category include Susan C. Bauman's *In Search of the Japanese Spirit in Talent Education* (published in 1994 after her death, but containing only pre-1984 references),<sup>25</sup> *The Talent Education School of Shin'ichi Suzuki: An Analysis* (1981),<sup>26</sup> and *Suzuki Education in Action: A*

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<sup>23</sup> Shin'ichi Suzuki, *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*, ed. Elizabeth Mills and Therese Cecile Murphy (Berkeley: Diablo Press, 1973).

<sup>24</sup> Hermann, *Man and His Philosophy*.

<sup>25</sup> Susan C. Bauman, *In Search of the Japanese Spirit in Talent Education: A Research Essay* (Secaucus, NJ: Summy-Birchard, 1994).

<sup>26</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*.

*Story of Talent Training from Japan*.<sup>27</sup>

A third trend featured works by Suzuki teachers, and occasionally Suzuki parents, for other Suzuki parents, offering words of advice, encouragement, and strategies for successful Suzuki practice in the home such as William and Constance Starr's *To learn with love: A Companion for Suzuki Parents* (1983),<sup>28</sup> and Kay Slone's *They're Rarely Too Young and Never Too Old to Twinkle* (1982).<sup>29</sup> This trend in Suzuki publishing is strong still today, with recent publications including Ed Sprunger's *Helping Parents Practice* (2005).<sup>30</sup>

Aside from the last of the aforementioned trends in Suzuki authorship, Suzuki topics have changed since the early decades of the Suzuki Method in America. Most recently, personal treatises on how to best execute the approach have become popular. Seminal examples include Ed Kreitman's *Teaching from the Balance Point* (1999),<sup>31</sup> and Edmund Sprunger's *Building Violin Skills* (2012). Some works in this genre serve as idea-sharing between teachers, and some may be quite accessible for Suzuki parents. Other treatises are described as "supplementary materials" to the Suzuki literature, but are better described as teacher-to-teacher communication, in which Suzuki teachers present their individual approaches to certain aspects of Suzuki teaching for adoption by other Suzuki teachers. This genre notably includes *Group Lessons for Suzuki: Violin and Viola* by Carolyn McCall, Joanne Martin's *I Can Read Music*, and Kerstin

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<sup>27</sup> Clifford A. Cook, *Suzuki Education in Action: A Story of Talent Training from Japan* (New York: Exposition Press, 1970).

<sup>28</sup> William J. Starr, *To Learn with Love: A Companion for Suzuki Parents* (Knoxville: Ellis Press, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> Kay Collier Slone, *They're Rarely Too Young – and Never Too Old to "Twinkle": Teaching Insights into the World of Beginning Suzuki Violin* (Lexington, KY: Life Force Press, 1982).

<sup>30</sup> Edmund Sprunger, *Helping Parents Practice: Ideas for Making it Easier* (St. Louis: Yes Publishing, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Edward Kreitman, *Teaching from the Balance Point: A Guide for Suzuki Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Western Springs, IL: Western Springs School of Talent Education, 1998).

Wartburg's *Step by Step* series.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the newest genre in Suzuki-related authorship exists in academia, where a handful of dissertations have been published. These works most often compare the Suzuki Method to other specific string-pedagogical approaches. These are general pedagogical and philosophical comparisons, focusing less on specific educational procedures and more on the general emphases within each pedagogue's approach. Two notable examples come from Marianne Perkins, who compared the pedagogies of Kato Havas, Paul Rolland, and Shin'ichi Suzuki,<sup>33</sup> and Marian Moorhead, who compared the results of Suzuki and traditional teaching.<sup>34</sup>

This overview of the background, structure, and historical and current trends in the Suzuki Method frames the upcoming two chapters. To understand Chapter 2, the reader must understand the basic principles of the Suzuki Method, but perhaps more importantly must understand the history and growth of the method worldwide. The reader will also benefit from an understanding of the trends in Suzuki scholarship. Most notably, the reader must understand that professional commentary and assessments of the cultural and social appropriateness of the Suzuki Method was once a prevalent topic, fell out of popularity, and conclusions from that era have never been re-examined. To understand chapter 3, the reader will benefit from a basic understanding of the principles of the Suzuki Method. To understand the value of chapter 3, the reader should also understand that this chapter does not fit within an existing body of research, rather, it gives attention to details of the relationship between the Suzuki Method and traditional teaching that

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<sup>32</sup> Kerstin Wartburg, *Step by Step: An Introduction to Successful Practice* (Miami: Summy-Birchard, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Marianne Murray Perkins, "A Comparison of Violin Playing Techniques: Kato Havas, Paul Rolland, and Shin'ichi Suzuki" (DMA diss., Catholic University of America, 1993).

<sup>34</sup> Marian Newsome Moorhead, "The Suzuki Method: A Comparative Analysis of the Perceptual/Cognitive Listening Development in Third Grade Students Trained in the Suzuki, Traditional, and Modified Suzuki Music Methods" (PhD diss., University of South Florida, 2005).

have, to date, not received attention in Suzuki-related publications.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SUZUKI METHOD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO WESTERN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

### *INTRODUCTION*

Since arriving in the United States in 1958, the Suzuki Method has had a strong impact on the American music and American music education communities. The method is currently taught by thousands of teachers across the country. Suzuki groups perform widely, ranging from local festivals to the National Anthem at major-league baseball games, from Chicago's Symphony Center to New York's Carnegie Hall. Suzuki alumni from the method's early days have now grown into adulthood and fill numerous concertmaster and section positions in major symphony orchestras worldwide, while other Suzuki alumni fill the ranks of the nation's community and volunteer orchestras.<sup>35</sup> However, alongside the Suzuki Method's successful growth in America, the Suzuki Method has faced challenges in establishing its reputation in the United States. The fact that the Suzuki Method is Japanese import has, over the years, made many American musicians and teachers skeptical about the method's cultural appropriateness in the United States. Beginning with the Suzuki Method's arrival in America in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the sentiment was widely expressed by Suzuki insiders and outsiders alike the Suzuki Method embodies Japanese-cultural paradigms that are incongruous with American culture, and therefore that the Suzuki Method represents cultural values that preclude an affinity with American educational practices. Even Suzuki-Method advocates published numerous opinions that

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<sup>35</sup> Augustus Brathwaite, "Suzuki Training: Musical Growth or Hindrance?" *Music Educators Journal* 75, no. 2 (October 1988): 43.

Japanese-cultural representations within the Suzuki Method made the method difficult to successfully utilize by American teachers and students.<sup>36</sup>

#### ***ORIGINS OF CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SUZUKI METHOD***

It is expected that Suzuki skeptics would have spread a reputation of the Suzuki Method as culturally incongruous with American educational practices. However, the word-of-mouth opinion propagated by Suzuki outsiders is less consequential than the opinions of Suzuki advocates and insiders, which were published have circulated among Suzuki teachers and parents for the last fifty years. These publications have influenced not only public perception of the method, but they have also influenced the perception and ultimately the practice of the Suzuki Method by teachers who become trained in the Suzuki approach.

During the 1960s–80s, the American violinists who elected to study personally with Shin'ichi Suzuki in the United States and Japan wrote numerous articles about the Japanese cultural paradigms behind the Suzuki Method. Those teachers went to Japan to study, and were impacted not only by their impressions of Suzuki, but also by their impressions of Japan. They saw an education system that was far more rigorous, authoritarian, and competitive than American education. They also observed interactions between children, teachers, and parents in Suzuki violin lessons, and they observed that Japanese children were deferential and obedient in a way that American children were not. They also observed that Japanese mothers devoted a great amount of time to their children, attending lessons and tending to their children round-the-clock, whereas more and more American women were becoming career-oriented and having to juggle parental activities with professional ones. These great differences between Japanese and

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<sup>36</sup> Cook, *Suzuki Education in Action*; Landers, *Talent Education School*, 121–32.

American schools, Japanese and American attitudes surrounding the role of teachers and students, and Japanese attitudes toward authority, individualism, conformity, and obedience brought up questions in those teachers' minds of how, if at all, the Suzuki Method could succeed in America, in such a different culture.

This topic was popular, and understandably so. Given the salient exoticism of importing a Japanese educational approach in the United States, it was relevant to examine the Japanese cultural elements within the Suzuki Method in order to ascertain the benefits, difficulties, and desirability of utilizing a culturally foreign method.

While these American teachers found the Suzuki Method to be pedagogically excellent and useful in American settings, they also deduced that the Suzuki Method was based in Japanese practices that were incongruous with American paradigms or even undesirable to American students and their parents. Furthermore, they observed that Americans were reluctant to accept an educational method with Japanese cultural basis, due to differences in American and Japanese education styles. While these authors aimed to see the Suzuki Method take hold in America, they simultaneously concluded that America presented a difficult cultural context for successful practice of the Suzuki Method. Their shared conclusion was that the Suzuki Method could be successfully practiced by Americans by gaining a deeper understanding of Japanese indigenous psychology<sup>37</sup> and by modifying the method to make it more appropriate for American use.<sup>38</sup>

One such publication from the 1980s by American violin professor and Suzuki teacher, Susan Bauman, demonstrates the common American Suzuki teacher's beliefs about the appropriateness of the Suzuki Method in America. Bauman wrote, "Suzuki has been highly

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<sup>37</sup> Bauman, *Japanese Spirit*.

<sup>38</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 129.

influenced by an Eastern culture which values character training not only for the good of the individual but for the good of the whole society. These Eastern ideals then that are inherent within the Talent Education method and philosophy and are often the reason for the criticism of the Suzuki Method in Western Countries.”<sup>39</sup> In her book *In Search of the Japanese Spirit in Talent Education* (1994, published after her death, which cites sources only before 1984), Bauman recorded her observations that the Suzuki Method was practiced differently in Japan than in America.<sup>40</sup> Based on that observation, Bauman concluded that if Americans were to successfully practice the Suzuki Method, they must study and adopt Eastern-cultural paradigms and understand Zen Buddhism.<sup>41</sup> Bauman argued that Japanese Suzuki teachers are uniquely equipped to interpret the words, writings, and lessons they take from Shin’ichi Suzuki.

Ray Landers took a slightly different approach to reach the same conclusion in his book, *The Talent School of Shin’ichi Suzuki: An Analysis*. He noticed that Japanese Suzuki students exhibited a devotion to authority that American students didn’t, and he determined that this deference led Japanese students to achieve greater success with the Suzuki Method than their American counterparts, particularly in the beginning stages of Suzuki training, where students learn by rote.<sup>42</sup> Landers also assigned the group-learning aspect of the Suzuki Method to the Japanese “group mindset” and the Japanese preference for conformity, which clashes with the American value for individuality and individualization in education. While Landers deemed certain aspects of the Suzuki Method to have the post potential for success in Japanese educational arenas, he also felt that the Suzuki Method would be valuable and successful in

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<sup>39</sup> Bauman, *Japanese Spirit*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6; Craig Timmerman, *Journey Down the Kreisler Highway: Reflections on the Teachings of Shin’ichi Suzuki* (Memphis: Ivory Palaces Music Publishing, 1987), 56–58.

<sup>41</sup> Cook, *Suzuki Education in Action*, 78–80.

<sup>42</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 144.



American education. Landers suggested the best way to practice Suzuki education was to modify the method in the subtle ways necessary to adapt it to American culture.<sup>43</sup>

Landers' perceptions of the cultural profile of the Suzuki Method were echoed by Japanese-education scholar Nobuko Shimahara, who wrote about the Suzuki Method in the 1980s. In her article, "The Cultural Basis of Student Achievement in Japan," Shimahara described the Suzuki Method as an extension of "Japanese indigenous psychology." She argued that the Suzuki Method embodied Japanese-cultural paradigms that were alien to American thought.

Specifically, Shimahara wrote that Suzuki's belief that any normal child can develop high ability was a Japanese concept; that it was Japanese to think that the environment is responsible for students' achievement; and that maternal involvement in a child's education was Japanese.<sup>44</sup>

Another prominent American Suzuki pedagogue, John Kendall, took still another approach to draw the same conclusion. Kendall drew a direct parallel between Suzuki's approach and late-twentieth-century Japanese schooling in his book, *The Suzuki Violin Method in American Education* (1964). He wrote, "Japanese society is organized differently from our own with different values...Japanese schools differ markedly from American schools...What can the [American] private teacher use of these methods?"<sup>45</sup> Kendall does not explicitly suggest that the Suzuki Method is derived from the same cultural fabric as late-twentieth-century Japanese education, but he observed that the Suzuki Method was thriving in late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japan, where the educational atmosphere was quite unlike America's. Kendall wondered if simply the educational structures in Japan were more appropriate contexts for the Suzuki Method than

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 121–32.

<sup>44</sup> Nobuo K. Shimahara, "The Cultural Basis of Student Achievement in Japan," in "Education in Japan," special issue, *Comparative Education* 22, no. 1 (1986): 1926.

<sup>45</sup> John Kendall, *The Suzuki Method in American Music Education: A Suzuki Method Symposium* (Princeton: Suzuki Method International, 1985).

America. Kendall became a great expert on the Suzuki Method, and offered his insights to American teachers and parents as to what American scenarios the Suzuki Method would and would not work best.

Where Kendall's attitude was positive, that was not universally the case. Violin professor Charles Parker, wrote in the 1960s that successful Suzuki education was dependent on Japanese cultural nativity. He wrote, "Japanese psychology demands that one play a role...Suzuki's influence is due in large measure to the fact that in oriental thought there is a positive...reverence for teacher and master."<sup>46</sup> Parker's statement reveals a hefty dose of stereotyping. To describe Japanese students as "playing a role" implies that American students, by contrast, are somehow behaving more authentically in their lessons or learning more genuinely, and that Americans would rather not insist their children take such a submissive, passive role in their education.

Another prolifically published Suzuki teacher and teacher-trainer, Constance Starr, wrote in the 1970s, "There are those who say the ethnic difference in the Oriental and Western cultures make adoption of these ideas difficult in the United States. It is true that a direct transplant is not always feasible."<sup>47</sup>

Only one Suzuki author differed from the rest in his conclusions about the relative aptness of Japanese or American teachers to practice the Suzuki Method. By his assessment, the Japanese did not have a greater proclivity for understanding Suzuki's words than their American counterparts. In *Journey Down the Kreisler Highway* (1987), Craig Timmerman asserted that Japanese and American practices of the Suzuki Method both differed from Suzuki's personal pedagogy. When Timmerman arrived in Japan to study with Suzuki, he had been long immersed

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<sup>46</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 129.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

in the American Suzuki community. In Japan, he realized that the Suzuki Method, in both countries, had evolved in the hands of teachers who interpreted Suzuki's words through their own cultural lenses.<sup>48</sup> Timmerman asserted that American and Japanese teachers worked equally to absorb Suzuki's instructions, but that both countries' executions of the method inevitably reflected their own cultural paradigms. He illustrated this point with a situation where he observed Japanese teachers assigning one of Suzuki's famous bow exercises: this one in particular he always said to practice "10,000 times." Timmerman relayed that when Suzuki would tell an American student or teacher-trainee to practice this exercise "10,000 times," they would laugh at Suzuki's "joke"—Suzuki was known for his sense of humor.<sup>49</sup> But when Japanese Suzuki teachers assigned the "10,000 times," they were assigning it literally, and their students spent hours obeying the instruction.<sup>50</sup> Timmerman, an American who had extensive personal experience studying with Suzuki, felt that Suzuki's words could have been just as easily "lost in translation," so to speak, by either party. Whether Timmerman's view was built on fact or intuition, historical evidence substantiates his opinion that the Suzuki Method is not perfectly or automatically understood by having a Japanese background. Rather, interpreting the Suzuki Method through a Japanese lens filters Suzuki's words through a set of paradigms that differed from Suzuki's, and the same goes for Americans.

These publications by Timmerman, Parker, Starr, Kendall, Cook, and Landers were all published during the 1960s–70s, while the Suzuki Method was relatively new to American string-pedagogical culture. In spite of these Suzuki advocates' concerns about the potential for

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<sup>48</sup> Timmerman, *Kreisler Highway*, 56–58.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–57.

success of the Suzuki Method in a culturally foreign context, and because of their efforts to spread the method far and wide in the United States, the Suzuki Method is now well-established in America. Trends in research and publishing on the Suzuki Method have shifted entirely away from assessments of the cultural appropriateness of the Suzuki Method in America. Since the 1990s, Suzuki teachers have all but abandoned discussions on the foreignness of Suzuki's pedagogy in favor of pedagogical treatises, written by individual Suzuki teacher-trainers.<sup>51</sup> This shift reflects the method's successful and established status today. However, the publications from the 1960s–80s left a lingering reputation about the Suzuki Method, which it turns out, is imbalanced. The conversation about the cultural profile and congruity with American culture needs to be re-opened and re-examined in order to incorporate a wider body of evidence. Publications from the 1960s–80s took into account certain information and perceptions about Japanese culture during the period of their publications, which often reflected common biased American perceptions about Japanese culture from that era. Mainstream attitudes toward Japan at the time were highly influenced by cultural and political attitudes by America toward Japan from that era, which lingered from tensions between the United States and Japan after World War II.<sup>52</sup> Those perceptions gave American Suzuki teachers pause about the potential success of the Suzuki Method in America, and it gave American parents pause as to whether to enroll their children in a Japanese type of education.

Furthermore, for American researchers publishing on the Suzuki Method during the 1960s–80s, making cultural assessments about a Japanese educational system was a complex task in

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<sup>51</sup> See Sprunger, *Helping Parents Practice*; Edward Kreitman, *Teaching from the Balance Point*; Susan Kempter, *How Muscles Learn: Teaching the Violin with the Body in Mind* (Miami: Summy-Birchard, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Merry White, *The Japanese Educational Challenge: A Commitment to Children* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 139, 145–53, 187–89.

more ways than one. During that era, stereotypes and criticisms of Japanese culture and education were abundant in mainstream discourse. Merry White, a Japanese and American education scholar, stated that the perceptions and issues surrounding childhood and education in Japan were commonplace in public debate during the 1980s, “having been called ‘evidence’ in the rhetoric of the trade war.”<sup>53</sup> She concluded that in spite of the nuances and truths about Japanese education, including the various and disparate historical incarnations of Japanese education that have existed, Americans were quick to reject Japanese educational practices, due to a tendency “to find Japanese success fundamentally flawed.”<sup>54</sup>

The criticisms and suspicions of the Suzuki Method cited by violin professor Ray Landers ring of the scornful attitude toward Japanese culture and educational practices during the 1980s, as well as the casual racism that prevailed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Americans toward the Japanese. These include perceptions of the Suzuki Method as a “mass teaching method,” perceptions that it does not develop individuality, the fear that teaching by imitation neither teaches the child to become an independent musician nor to read music, and the perception that the method’s success depends on a level of devotion to authority that is at odds with American teacher-student relationships.<sup>55</sup>

Needless to say, Suzuki insiders ignore those criticisms, believing that they know better what the Suzuki Method truly embodies. But for those Americans who may have come to know the Suzuki Method through media images of children playing in unison, teachers and students bowing at the end of lessons, and young children projecting “serious expressions” in

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 1–2, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>55</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 124.

performances (a common criticism, according to Landers), those criticisms about the Suzuki Method would have aligned strongly with mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup>-century media images and common perceptions of Japanese schooling. But even those erroneous correlations between the Suzuki Method and Japanese education were based on selective, if not wholly incorrect stereotypes. In *The Japanese Educational Challenge*, White criticized the simplicity and falsehood of American stereotypes of Japanese education. She wrote,

Western observers portray the Japanese child, his experiences and his talents, selectively. The images are psychologically projective and self-protective. Our media show a photo of a Japanese child sitting at his desk, in a well-ordered row, wearing a white headband marked with red and black characters exhorting him to struggle on...The image is designed to evoke history as well as to imply the future: this child is the kamikaze pilot of his generation, hell-bent on Japanese supremacy...Japanese educational successes are the product of an inhuman regime of forced-march study...the playgrounds are empty, mothers are homework tyrants; weekends and vacations are devoted to organized study. (2)

Of course, not all American impressions of Japanese educational culture were derived from misinformation or from stereotypes. White notes that late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese schools emphasized the virtue of conforming, toward a goal of social homogeny.<sup>56</sup> Japanese students did (and still do) endure the rigor of a year-round academic calendar. Japan does employ a single-track education system, and Japanese education revolves around “an intensive examinations system,” a by-product of which is the common practice of enrolling students in after-school juku, or “cram schools,” to meet the demands of the exams, at the expense of free time.<sup>57</sup>

This conversation needs to be re-opened among the Suzuki and music-education communities to allow for a better-informed, more balanced, and more detached examination of the background of the Suzuki Method and the content of Suzuki’s writings. The lack of attention

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<sup>56</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 139, 145–53, 187–89.

<sup>57</sup> Miki Y. Ishikida, *Japanese Education in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), 1–8.

to the cultural and intellectual background behind the Suzuki Method has allowed an imbalanced view of the method to take hold in the string pedagogy community since the 1980s, including the Suzuki community itself, namely the conclusion that the Suzuki Method's Japanese origins preclude an affinity with Western educational norms. To allow the topic to go dormant is not enough—even if new generations of Suzuki teachers and students focus less on the previously propagated cultural discrepancies than previous generations have, artifactual perceptions will continue to influence how the method is practiced, and important truths about the cultural profile of the Suzuki's educational approach will prevent the method from being seen as it should be.

In order to assess the cultural paradigms represented by Suzuki's pedagogy, and further to determine the social and cultural appropriateness of Suzuki's approach in America, the Suzuki Method should be examined not at all in relation to 1960s–80s Japan; Suzuki was over 60 years old in 1960. Rather, Suzuki's ideas should be contextualized among the influences present in his cultural environment during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Suzuki was educated and developing his educational philosophies. Japanese education and culture during Suzuki's formative years differed from 1960s–1980s Japan. Suzuki grew up early Meiji- and Taisho-period Japan, which was much more cosmopolitan and whose educational practices were more Progressive than 1960s–80s Japan, which was nationalistic and featured top-down, one-track “traditional” style education. This inapt link between the Suzuki Method and modern Japan certainly led to a skewed interpretation of the cultural paradigms represented in Suzuki's various pedagogical devices.

A deeper look into Suzuki's intellectual and cultural biography encourages a different cultural interpretation of Suzuki's pedagogy, and it reveals that an important relationship has, until now, not been acknowledged. With appropriate historical evidence from Suzuki's past taken

into account, another important element in his philosophy would come to light, that is, a link between the Suzuki Method and what is known as the Progressive tradition in Western education.

### ***SUZUKI'S INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND***

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan went through phases of welcoming in and shutting out foreign influences its education systems. Suzuki, born in 1898, experienced and observed great contrast in the Japan's cultural and educational-cultural atmosphere, particularly during his early years. He was born during the final years of the Meiji Empire, (1868-1912), was an adolescent and young adult during the Taishō Democracy (1912-1926), and experienced the duration of the Shōwa period (1926-1989), which included WWII, the post-WWII American Occupation, and the re-Japanization of education post-Occupation.

Histories of Japanese Education by Miki Ishida, Merry White, Nobuo Kobayashi, Edward Beauchamp and Richard Rubinger describe drastic changes in Japanese culture and education from one period to the next in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japan. Prior to Emperor Meiji's instatement in 1868, Japan had been isolationist and xenophobic.<sup>58</sup> Education was sparse; wealthy Japanese were educated in small private schools, and curriculum was patterned after ancient Confucian education.<sup>59</sup> It was during Meiji's reign, according to Kobayashi, that "Japan experienced an unprecedented influx of Western culture."<sup>60</sup> In his 2005 study of Japanese education, Ishikida describes how Emperor Meiji, upon rising to the throne, went to great lengths to create an educational system that would be competitive with those of the West. Meiji emphasized the

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<sup>58</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 57, 61–62.

<sup>59</sup> Ishikida, *Japanese Education*, 12–15.

<sup>60</sup> Victor N. Kobayashi, *John Dewey in Japanese Educational Thought* (Ann Arbor, MI: Malloy Lithoprinting, 1964), 17.



teaching of nationalist loyalty in his newly created public school system; students took hours of ethics classes every week to instill patriotism and veneration of the emperor.<sup>61</sup> But in spite of his patriotic leanings, Meiji saw a necessity to adopt Western educational practices, in order for Japan to be directly competitive with Western countries. After a research tour of Europe and America by the Japanese ministry of education, Japan implemented a French style of school organization and an American curriculum, which was driven by German educational theories.<sup>62</sup> In order to successfully implement so many Western practices, the ministry of education imported numerous faculty and administrators, particularly from the United States. A Rutgers Mathematics professor took the position of superintendent of Japanese schools and colleges. The Japanese teacher education program employed American faculty members, including Marion Scott, which led to the implementation of American classroom styles and textbooks throughout Japanese public schools. According to Beauchamp and Rubinger in *Education in Japan*, during the early period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western emphases on individual goals, equality among classes, and self-improvement rose to popularity in Japanese schooling, replacing the Confucian morality taught prior to the Meiji Empire. The Meiji era even experienced the advent of Western Progressivism in its schools, at the same time that Progressivism was developed and became influential in Europe and America. The Progressive trend rose to a dominant position in educational philosophy in Japan by the 1920s, just as it did in the United States.<sup>63</sup>

Western imports in Japanese education were wide-ranging, from philosophical approaches to practical implementations. Teacher-education professor Marion Scott, who had also imported so

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<sup>61</sup> Ishikida, *Japanese Education*, 12–15.

<sup>62</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 58.

<sup>63</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp and Richard Rubinger, *Education in Japan: A Source Book* (New York: Garland, 1989), 181–84.

many practical aspects of American education, rejected Japan's top-down, tutoring-and-reciting style of learning and encouraged the adoption of the Pestalozzian approach. Swiss pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) is credited as one of the principal influences in the development of Western Progressive education.<sup>64</sup> Pestalozzian education replaced top-down, authoritarian traditional teaching with loving, respectful treatment of children, insight into their natural modes of learning and preferences in activities, and a belief that catering to children's emotional and developmental needs would produce greater success than forcing children to adapt to adults' educational processes.<sup>65</sup>

Pestalozzi is considered to be the main forerunner to the 20<sup>th</sup> century Progressive tradition, the grandfather, so to speak, of 20<sup>th</sup> century progressivism. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw small Progressive trends sprinkled throughout Europe and American, but progressivism grew to the height of its popularity with the adoption of John Dewey's philosophy and educational practices, both in the United States and Japan. Though not the first Progressive to influence public education practices, Dewey is frequently referred to as "the father of Progressive education."<sup>66</sup> Kobayashi notes Deweyan influences in Japan as early as 1888, when Yujiro Motora, a professor at Tokyo Imperial University and Tokyo Normal School, published the article, "The Psychology of Dewey." By 1900, translations of Dewey's "Outline of a Critical Theory of Ethics" and "School and Society" were published. Dewey's dominance was official

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<sup>64</sup> William J. Reese, "The Origins of Progressive Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2001): 8.

<sup>65</sup> Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *The Education of Man: Aphorisms* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969).

<sup>66</sup> Paul Woodring, "The Development of Teacher Education," in *Teacher Education*, Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 74<sup>th</sup>, Part 2, ed. Kevin Ryan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 10.

and undeniable in 1905, when Japan's Ministry of education commissioned the 1905 edition of "School and Society" to serve as a guidebook for Japanese teachers.<sup>67</sup>

Dewey spread his ideas directly in Japan in the 1910s, when in 1919 he was invited to give eight lectures at Tokyo Imperial University. According to Jay Martin in his biography of John Dewey, Dewey was already quite well known before he arrived, because he had sponsored many Asian students in America and was the only well-known American scholar interested in Asian philosophy.<sup>68</sup> Martin wrote that Dewey was known in Asia for his "modernist revolution" and his "democratization through education" idea. These high-profile lectures at Tokyo Imperial represent only a small fraction of the exposure Dewey had in Japan. He was a guest of honor at the Concordia Society and the Japan-America society, and he spoke at a variety of private universities, including Waseda University, where he already had several students teaching. He also appeared at numerous normal schools, teachers associations, and other intellectual associations. In addition to his lecturing, his writings were published regularly in Japan. The collection of lectures Dewey gave at Tokyo Imperial University was made into a book called *Reconstruction in Philosophy*;<sup>69</sup> he had many articles in *Kaizo*, a scholarly Japanese publication, and Dewey wrote three sketches about Japan, called *Japan and America*.<sup>70</sup>

After Dewey's professional commitments were complete, he stayed several months in Japan for sightseeing and recreation. However, in spite of his intentions to vacation, his fame in Japan brought invitations for public speaking everywhere he went; his desired vacation became instead an extended lecture tour. When Dewey did leave Japan, he went directly to China. There, he

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<sup>67</sup> Kobayashi, *John Dewey*, 25–27.

<sup>68</sup> Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 311.

<sup>69</sup> John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004).

<sup>70</sup> John Dewey, *Japan and America*, "Dial 66, no. 790 (1919): 501–3.

taught for two and a half years, lecturing to educators and the public on education. In addition to his speaking engagements, he was hired to write for *Asia* magazine and gave many interviews. Dewey kept in touch with many Japanese intellectuals and published in Japanese journals while in China. His influence remained popular in Japan, and he returned for a second tour in 1921.<sup>71</sup>

Dewey's educational theories and practices were popular during the latter years of the Meiji empire and the entirety of the Taishō democracy that followed. White describes that during the 1920s of the Taishō democracy, Dewey was “particularly en vogue in Japanese education.”<sup>72</sup> In *The Japanese Educational Challenge*, she wrote, “[Dewey's] influence was strong in part because while his proposals could clearly be seen as modern and Western, they were in their underlying philosophy close to indigenous Japanese ideas of the unity of cognitive, physical and affective development. The roots for the idea of educating the ‘whole child,’ which returned with the American occupation reforms after the war, were deeply Japanese, and because of their Western cachet could flourish as a modern ‘import.’”<sup>73</sup>

Deweyan progressivism was not the only Progressive force in Japanese education during the Taishō democracy. Beauchamp and Rubinger document Japan's experimentation with Dalton Schools, which originated in the United States, and Montessori Schools, which originated in Italy.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, Swiss psychologist and Progressive education advocate Jean Piaget had a strong influence in Japan during the 1920s.<sup>75</sup> With this influx of Western progressivism,

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<sup>71</sup> Martin, *Education of John Dewey*, 319.

<sup>72</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 61.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Beauchamp, *Education in Japan*, 63, 224d.

<sup>75</sup> Yasuhiko Kato and Constance Katnii, “Piaget's Constructivism and Childhood Education in Japan,” *Prospects* 31, no. 2 (2001): 209–20.

Beauchamp and Rubinger relate that “a spirit of individualism and independence” saturated Japanese culture.<sup>76</sup>

Suzuki experienced years of Progressive trends and influence during the Taishō period. But after twenty-three years of blended cultural exposures in Japan, Suzuki moved to Germany for his violin studies, and this long-term Western-cultural immersion shaped Suzuki’s adulthood. Violin professors Evelyn Hermann and Ray Landers describe Suzuki’s rich and varied experiences: For eight years, he studied violin under Karl Klingler. Having only studied the violin for a few years before his departure from Japan, Suzuki received the bulk of his music education in the West. In addition to his immersion in European Conservatory-style pedagogy, Suzuki adopted cultural practices from the West. After years of Zen Buddhist study, Suzuki converted from Buddhism to Christianity. He married German singer Waltraud Prange,<sup>77</sup> with whom he attempted to settle permanently in Switzerland.<sup>78</sup> Masaaki Honda writes that Suzuki’s experience in Germany led him to the conclusion that the proper educative environment is responsible for cultivating talent; according to Shimahara, this idea is uniquely Japanese,<sup>79</sup> but Honda states that Suzuki came to this perspective during his education in Berlin.<sup>80</sup>

Suzuki returned to Japan in 1930. In *Japanese Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Ishikida chronicles a shift in the quality and focus of Japanese education in the 1930s, in the years leading up to the Second World War. Schools shifted their attention from academics to war support,

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<sup>76</sup> Beauchamp and Rubinger, *Education in Japan*, 63, 224d.

<sup>77</sup> Hermann, *Man and His Philosophy*, 11–19; Landers, *Talent Education School*, 1–2.

<sup>78</sup> Masaaki Honda, *Shin’ichi Suzuki: Man of Love: A Suzuki Method Symposium* (Princeton: Suzuki Method International, 1984), 43.

<sup>79</sup> Shimahara, “Cultural Basis of Student Achievement,” 19–26.

<sup>80</sup> Honda, *Man of Love*, 39.

instituting military training classes, vocational classes, and increased civics and ethics training.<sup>81</sup> Instead of standard academics, patriotism and glorification of the Emperor became the main focus in the classroom. During this time, according to White, all Western influences were removed as a part of the drive for nationalistic loyalty.

During the war, Japan's educational system deteriorated. Many children were removed from schools and sent to work in factories, to replace their fathers who were preparing for war.<sup>82</sup> By the end of the war, every child enrolled in higher elementary schools through university was removed from school and sent to work in factories and farms, under the 1944 Student Workers Ordinance.<sup>83</sup> White notes that the resulting under-education of Japanese children dismayed Japanese parents. After the war, the American Occupation took over Japanese schooling. In spite of war-time feelings toward America, Japanese parents were willing enough to accept the implementation of Western schooling, if it could serve as an alternative to the failing education their children had been and could otherwise continue to receive. The teaching of democratic values, along with the introduction of American organizations like the PTA, were welcomed and flourished.<sup>84</sup>

Suzuki had left Japan at a time when culture was a blend of East and West, and when education was Westernized and Progressive. But by the time Suzuki returned to Japan in 1930, he came home to a changed cultural atmosphere. Suzuki's attitudes toward education had been cemented, and he was eager to implement his approach in Japan. However, while Suzuki attempted to promote his personal educational ideals, Japan grew increasingly militaristic,

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<sup>81</sup> Ishikida, *Japanese Education*, 15–17.

<sup>82</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 61–63.

<sup>83</sup> Ishikida, *Japanese Education*, 15–17.

<sup>84</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 57–65.

patriotic, and unwelcoming of foreign influence. This presented a challenge for Suzuki: while he was welcomed in Japanese conservatories for his expertise, and he was offered prestigious faculty positions working in the Japanese conservatory system, he was at odds with the philosophies and teaching approaches those schools endorsed. Suzuki was offered, and he refused, two music-directorship positions at universities, on the grounds that he wouldn't have the freedom to create the educational culture he desired. When it came to his educational approach, Suzuki refused to defer to or comply with Japanese standards and expectations. Not only did he refuse a faculty position at the Tokyo Conservatory, he told the school's director he felt the quality of education at that school was poor. When he was offered a position at another private university, he informed the administration he disagreed with the school's for-profit structure. After turning down these positions, Suzuki founded his own conservatory, the Imperial Music School. While the rest of Japan was eliminating Western influences, Suzuki hired European cello and violin professors as a part of his blended faculty; this is also where Suzuki began teaching very young children.<sup>85</sup>

When the war began, Suzuki struggled to keep the Imperial Music School afloat, as fewer Japanese wanted to learn Western Music. Eventually, he fled Tokyo and lived alone in the mountains, where he became ill from malnutrition and required an extended period of convalescence before returning to teach.

The end of the war precipitated the official institution of Suzuki's Talent Education Method.<sup>86</sup> Reacting to political unrest and feelings of ill-will between nations, Suzuki was inspired to promote peace through education. By providing excellent education, children would

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<sup>85</sup> Honda, *Man of Love*, 52.

<sup>86</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 3.

learn the traits of peaceful human beings; they would become considerate people by becoming sensitive to the beauties within music. In 1945, Suzuki published a statement criticizing the Japanese approach to education, in particular its compulsory education path. He argued that Japanese students suffered from being put on a one-track, “mass production” system, saying that the end goal of this system was to equalize ability of students, but that it prevented those with outstanding ability from developing their potential.<sup>87</sup> Not only does Suzuki’s outspokenness defy Japanese-cultural stereotypes, the content of his criticisms represents an internationally-influenced educational philosophy.<sup>88</sup> According to Merry White, a traditionally Japanese perspective would maintain that all humans have equal potential, which manifests differently based on the effort put in to developing it.<sup>89</sup>

Because of Suzuki’s rich and varied cultural exposures, the method Suzuki developed was inevitably complex in its cultural profile. As evidence from Beauchamp and Rubinger demonstrates, Suzuki was raised in an environment where John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, and Johann Pestalozzi had significant influence. When assigning the term “Japanese” to the Suzuki Method, it is important to consider that what is Japanese today was not Japanese during Suzuki’s early years. Links drawn between the Suzuki Method and other educational approaches must show common time origins, geographical basis, and must show similarities in the content, structure, and philosophy behind both approaches.

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<sup>87</sup> Honda, *Man of Love*, 58.

<sup>88</sup> A common criticism of the Suzuki Method has been that it, too, is a “mass production” style of education. This conclusion has been drawn by observers that Suzuki students learn a shared repertoire in a certain order. The repertoire is shared, in order to provide children music they can play together. However, Suzuki insisted children learn at their own pace and not be measured against each other. The Suzuki repertoire should not be confused with the Suzuki curriculum, which is individualized by each teacher. Teachers create exercises, games, and practice routines to serve each child’s individual needs.

<sup>89</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 19.



Drawing on appropriate evidence from Suzuki's intellectual and cultural biography, the lack of commonality between Suzuki's approach and modern Japanese education is explained. Now that Suzuki's cultural background has been more deeply investigated, it becomes possible to compare and contrast Suzuki's approach with popular pedagogical approaches from early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan, in order to better categorize the Suzuki approach within an educational trend. These comparisons reveal a strong affinity between the Western Progressives that dominated Japanese educational thought, and it becomes clear that Suzuki's approach is an organic member of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Progressive tradition.

***PEDAGOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHIN'ICHI SUZUKI'S PEDAGOGY AND WESTERN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION***

In order to contextualize the comparisons between Suzuki and certain Western Progressives, one must first understand what is meant by "Western Progressivism" and with what educational traditions it contrasts. William J. Reese, the president of the History of Education Society, describes Western progressivism as a trend contrasting with what he calls "traditional forms of instruction," which comprise previous trends in public-school education from Europe and America. Reese narrates the advent of progressivism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

Critics of traditional forms of child rearing and classroom instruction condemned what they saw as insidious notions about the nature of children and the antediluvian practices of the emerging public school system...an assortment of citizens proclaimed the discovery of new insights on children and how they best learned...They proclaimed that children were active, not passive, learners; that children were innocent and good, not fallen; that women, not men, best reared and educated the young; that early education, without question, made all the difference; that nature, and not books alone, was perhaps the best teacher; that kindness and benevolence, not stern discipline or harsh rebukes, should reign in the home and classroom; and, finally, that the curriculum needed serious reform, to remove the vestiges of medievalism. All agreed that what usually passed for

education was mind-numbing, unnatural, and pernicious, a sin against childhood.”<sup>90</sup>

Some similarities between the Suzuki Method and various Progressive philosophies have been written about. In *The Talent Education School of Shin'ichi Suzuki: An Analysis*, Ray Landers highlights similarities between the Suzuki and some well-known Progressives, including Jean Piaget, Carl Bereiter, Jerome Bruner, Maria Montessori, J. McV. Hunt, and Abraham Maslow.<sup>91</sup>

Landers observes the similarities between Suzuki and several Progressives, but does not say that Suzuki knew of or was influenced by any of them. Landers also does not claim that the educators he describes are all Progressives, consequently he makes no claims that Suzuki's pedagogy aligned with the Progressive tradition or contrasted with traditional approaches.

However, Suzuki was explicit about this leaning, though he spoke little on his relation to other educators in general. He spoke out against mainstream Japanese education in a public letter in 1945, criticizing Japan's mass-education, one-track system, which he believed missed the point of education and engendered no more than mediocrity among students.<sup>92</sup>

While Landers notices parallels between Suzuki and Progressivism, and while Suzuki cited Progressives Montessori and Piaget as influences,<sup>93</sup> there is a revealing trend in Suzuki's alignment with Western Progressivism. In Beauchamp and Rubinger's book, *Education in Japan*, the authors note that Pestalozzi's influence was such a direct, official process that Pestalozzian thought became native to Japanese education. Beauchamp and Rubinger also demonstrate that John Dewey was the strongest Progressive influence to take hold in Japan.

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<sup>90</sup> Reese, "Origins of Progressive Education," 2.

<sup>91</sup> Cook, *Suzuki Education in Action*, 81–120.

<sup>92</sup> Honda, *Man of Love*, 57–59.

<sup>93</sup> John Kendall, "Suzuki's Mother Tongue Method," *Music Educators Journal* 83, no. 1 (July 1996): 43.

While Suzuki credited Montessori and Piaget as influences to his pedagogy, those two educators prove to have less in common with Suzuki's educational philosophy than Dewey or Pestalozzi do. The strength of similarities between Pestalozzian and Deweyan progressivism compared to Montessori's or Piaget's progressivism shows that Suzuki aligned best with the Progressives that saturated Japan the most, not with the Progressives that he openly credits. This leads one to believe that the affinities between Dewey, Pestalozzi, and Suzuki are particularly organic—so deep and natural that Suzuki absorbed them without seeing them as external or particularly striking to his own psychology or background.

### **SUZUKI AND PESTALOZZI**

Reese traces 19<sup>th</sup>-century progressivism back to Pestalozzi's 18<sup>th</sup>-century influence, and it is between Pestalozzi's and Suzuki's pedagogies that the first striking parallel presents itself. Pestalozzi coined the term "whole child,"<sup>94</sup> that is so frequently used by Progressive educators, and is likewise used by the International Suzuki Association, which states, "the emphasis throughout [Suzuki education] is on the development of the whole child."<sup>95</sup>

In *The Education of Man: Aphorisms*, Pestalozzi explained that his pedagogical approach was based on a deep respect for children; this foreshadows the departure of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Progressives from traditional pedagogy, based on their view of children as inherently "good."

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<sup>94</sup> Layna Cole, "Feminism and the Development of Women in the History of Early Childhood Education," (paper submitted as the Comprehensive Exam for Teaching and Learning, University of North Dakota, 2005), <http://coolessay.org/docs/index-130132.html>.

<sup>95</sup> "The Suzuki Method," International Suzuki Association, accessed 14 March 2014, <http://internationalsuzuki.org/method.htm>.

Suzuki's philosophy is strongly reminiscent of Pestalozzi's. In *Ability Development from Age Zero*, he wrote, "I respect children as my teachers...I radiate respect for them."<sup>96</sup>

Pestalozzi made the unusual statement that love should be the foundation of education, "Without love, neither the physical nor intellectual powers will develop naturally."<sup>97</sup> Suzuki's seminal publication, which explains his teaching philosophy and approach, embodies the same attitude—he titled the work, "*Nurtured by Love*."<sup>98</sup>

Pestalozzi portrayed children as "seedlings," all of whom had the natural potential to grow into trees. Suzuki strikingly echoes Pestalozzi in *Nurtured by Love*, writing, "children are seedlings...a seed needs time and stimulation...with patience and repetition, the seed blossoms...children are the fruit of training and environment."<sup>99</sup> And like Pestalozzi, he believed that all children have the intrinsic ability to play music at a high level; it was only up to educators to educate properly so that children realize their potential.

Pestalozzi was a pioneer of the idea that education must take place in accordance with a child's motivation to learn, rather than educative experiences being imposed on unwilling children. Suzuki reacted against mainstream educational practices for the same reason. He wrote, "An adult can control his mind to act when there is something he must do...Young children, we have to be aware, are completely different. They don't 'do things because they have to.' They live in a natural world where they 'do things they feel like doing.'"<sup>100</sup>

Pestalozzi also argued that teachers must behave positively toward children in order to keep

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<sup>96</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 38.

<sup>97</sup> Pestalozzi, *Education of Man*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–8, 43–44.

<sup>100</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 48.

children motivated.<sup>101</sup> Suzuki explained the same concept: “When you work in the kitchen, if someone by your side...criticizes every move you make, there won’t be taste or shape, you won’t have the leisure to think with your own mind... It is the same with your child.”<sup>102</sup>

Pestalozzi was also a pioneer in the inclusion of women in the field of education, and he suggested that mothers should be responsible for educating their children when they were pre-school aged or outside of school.<sup>103</sup> Suzuki echoed Pestalozzi, saying “A mother’s influence is great...The responsibility for Education is in the home.”<sup>104</sup> Pestalozzi’s advocacy for maternal involvement in early childhood education and for mothers as home teachers contradicts Nobuo Shimahara’s claim that the Suzuki Method’s emphasis on maternal involvement is uniquely a Japanese concept, alien to Western educational practices or attitudes.<sup>105</sup>

Pestalozzi, like Suzuki, argued that learning happened through living, not through studying. In an effort to design educational experiences that cooperated with children’s natural modes of learning, Pestalozzi employed a cycle of well-designed opportunities to observe a phenomenon, followed by copious, mindful repetition of what was observed. Suzuki’s methods followed in Pestalozzi’s tradition. Suzuki discussed “the beauty of earnest repetition.”<sup>106</sup> He insisted his students engage in plentiful observation, through hours of listening to professional recordings of their assigned repertoire and by instructing students’ parents on the importance of concert-going for young children. Even Suzuki’s lesson format incorporated comprised a cycle of observation, imitation and repetition. Suzuki’s students attended lessons in groups of four, and took turns

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<sup>101</sup> Cole, “Feminism,” 8.

<sup>102</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can! An Approach to Suzuki Education* ([Boulder, CO?]: Suzuki Association of the Americas, 2003), A10

<sup>103</sup> Cole, “Feminism,” 6.

<sup>104</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 76–77.

<sup>105</sup> Shimahara, “Cultural Basis of Student Achievement,” 19–26.

<sup>106</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 42.

playing and being observed by their peers; therefore seventy-five percent of a child's lesson was spent carefully observing other children's playing. Likewise, group lessons, where numerous children play together, allow for children to observe and imitate each other.

While there is no documentation that Suzuki explicitly knew of Pestalozzi or that he credited him as an educational influence, the parallels are too strong to ignore. Pestalozzi was central in Japanese education during the very years that Suzuki was enrolled in school, and Pestalozzi's influence continued in Japan through direct implementation of his approach and through other Progressives in Japan who followed in Pestalozzi's footsteps, until the years before World War II, when foreign influences were removed and Japanese education turned away from Progressive, child-centered approaches.

### **SUZUKI AND DEWEY**

Dewey's and Suzuki's pedagogies shared enormous philosophical and methodological basis, and their approaches set themselves apart in philosophy and methods from both traditional Japanese and traditional Western instruction. Dewey and Suzuki made numerous criticisms of traditional education; both educators felt their approaches served a greater purpose and achieved better results than traditional schooling.

Perhaps the broadest criticism made by Dewey and Suzuki against traditional education was for the narrowness of traditional education's effectiveness. Both educators argued that traditional education lacked the ability to educate the whole child—not just cognitively, but also socially, emotionally, and morally.

Dewey and Suzuki argued that education's primary goal should be the development of good character, and while traditional schooling included plentiful moral teaching, Dewey and Suzuki felt it was ill-designed and ineffective. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey wrote, "It is a

commonplace of educational theory that the establishing of character is a comprehensive aim of school instruction and discipline.”<sup>107</sup> While he acknowledges traditional emphasis on character education, he goes on to explain his view that traditional education teaches merely moral habits, whereas he aims to develop children’s psychological processes and intrinsic motivation in order that that children should desire to act morally. He describes that in traditional education, “we are dealing with what may be called *training* in distinction from educative teaching. The changes considered are in outer action rather than in mental and emotional dispositions of behavior.” He explains, “Our conscious thoughts, observations, wishes, aversions are important, because they represent inchoate, nascent activities. They fulfill their destiny in issuing, later on, into specific and perceptible acts... There is an accentuation of personal consciousness whenever our instincts and ready formed habits find themselves blocked by novel conditions.”<sup>108</sup> Dewey explains this clearly in, *Experience and Education* (1938), saying that traditional methods of character education fail to instill adequate morality such that a person can make consistent moral decisions in unfamiliar situations. This, in turn, is because traditional education only trains children to conform their behaviors according to certain existing moral standards of rules and conduct.<sup>109</sup> Dewey believed that the development of morality was a process of transforming children’s nature from what is biologically present into what is civilized. He explained that human beings are born only with individualistic tendencies, but that individualistic attitudes are poisonous to healthy societies. He therefore believed the most important process in education to be the exchange of a child’s individualistic tendencies for altruistic motives. He explained, “Beings

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<sup>107</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 402.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; 404.

<sup>109</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 17–32.

who are born not only unaware of, but quite indifferent to, the aims and habits of the social group have to be rendered cognizant of them and actively interested. Education, and education alone, spans the gap.”<sup>110</sup>

Suzuki made the same criticism against the shortcomings of traditional education’s moral instruction in a speech given in the 1973, arguing that mainstream education resulted in deficits in interpersonal sensitivity.<sup>111</sup> Likewise in *Nurtured by Love*, he wrote that “Education today simply teaches the maxim, ‘be kind.’ The world is full of intellectuals who are very well aware that ‘one should be kind to people,’ but who are, in fact, unhappy egoists. Today’s society is the result of this sort of education.”<sup>112</sup> Specifically, Suzuki criticized mainstream music education for its sole emphasis on musical skills. He believed that negative morality was a natural by-product of any education which did not specifically aim to cultivate student’s inner motivation toward others. Masaaki Honda quotes Suzuki, “It is a pity there are a great number of people who are good players and still possess undesirable character. I believe it depends on the teaching process. If the teaching is concentrated only on musical technique, then jealousy, competition, and ill will might develop...Our goal is not to make musicians. Music is just a method for developing good character...Simply put, our method is to develop love through music.”<sup>113</sup>

Dewey and Suzuki’s concern with the development of intrinsic character reflected a concern that traditional education would fail to produce socially-minded citizens who would produce peaceful and thriving societies. Both Dewey and Suzuki believed that it was education that would produce war-like or peaceful conditions in the future, through the development of

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<sup>110</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 7, 17.

<sup>111</sup> Suzuki, *Speeches and Essays*, 33.

<sup>112</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 85.

<sup>113</sup> Honda, *The Vehicle of Music: Reflections on a Life with Shin’ichi Suzuki and the Talent Education Movement* (Miami: Summy-Birchard, 2002), 180.



individuals with social and moral instincts. Dewey and Suzuki were explicit in their efforts to instill in their students attitudes of good citizenship. Dewey wrote, “I believe it is the business of everyone interested in education to insist upon the school as the primary and most effective instrument of social progress and reform in order that society may be awakened to realize what the school stands for, and aroused to the necessity of endowing the educator with sufficient equipment properly to perform his task.”<sup>114</sup> Dewey explained that his goal for graduates was that they would “use [their] own powers for social ends.”<sup>115</sup> He wrote, “the art of...giving shape to human powers and adapting them to social service is the supreme art...no insight, sympathy, tact, or executive power is too great for such service.”<sup>116</sup>

Suzuki propounded a similar point of view. He wanted his students to understand that there are “innumerable things to do for others and for society.”<sup>117</sup> He spoke frequently on the goals of his pedagogy, saying, “Teaching music is not my main purpose. I want to make good citizens, noble human beings.”<sup>118</sup> He wrote, “Without good people you cannot have good nations,”<sup>119</sup> and “If every child is nurtured in a good environment from the day of birth, there will be no crime. If a child is not nurtured in love, he will learn to hate others. He will want weapons, and he will eventually create war. Teaching music is one of the ways to guide children to see the beauty of

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<sup>114</sup> John Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” in *The Curriculum Studies Reader*, ed. David J. Flinders and Stephen J. Thornton (New York: Routledge-Falmer, 2004), 23.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>117</sup> Suzuki, *Young Children’s Talent Education*, 51.

<sup>118</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 105.

<sup>119</sup> Suzuki, *Speeches and Essays*, 34.

this world.”<sup>120</sup> Suzuki was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to improve society through music education.<sup>121</sup>

While moral tendencies are commonly considered to be mental or psychological processes, Dewey and Suzuki both argued that morality depended on emotional contentedness. Moreover, they both believed that happiness was not a genetic or fortuitous state of being, rather, they believed that personal happiness was a teachable quality. Sangok Park and F. M. Schied explain that in Dewey’s philosophy, “the goal of education, its ultimate payoff, is not higher scores on this or that test, nor is it increased feelings of self-esteem or the development of psychological powers of this or that kind, nor is it preparation for a future vocation. Instead, the true goal of education is richer and fuller experiencing; the ever-expanding capacity to appreciate more fully the living present.”<sup>122</sup> In *Where Love Is Deep*, Suzuki echoed Dewey. Suzuki wrote that his hope for education was that “the day will come when all children in the world will be educated and trained to be happy human beings.”<sup>123</sup>

In addition to the formation of personality, character, and morality, Dewey and Suzuki criticized traditional education for training only specific academic knowledge and skills, but failing to produce people with broad ability and independent reasoning. Dewey and Suzuki believed that education should empower students for continuous growth. Dewey described traditional education’s goal: “The main purpose or [objective] to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of

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<sup>120</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Honda, *Vehicle of Music*, 251.

<sup>122</sup> Sangok Park and Fred M. Schied, “The Limits of Dewey’s Philosophy: Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Experience,” (paper presented at the Adult Education Research Conference, Nova Scotia, Canada, 2007).

<sup>123</sup> Suzuki, *Speeches and Essays*, 51.

information and prepared forms of skill, which comprehend the material of instruction.”<sup>124</sup>

Dewey argued that traditional education only “prepared [students] for certain tasks or to condition a set of behaviors,”<sup>125</sup> and that that equipment was inadequate. He argued that traditional education had only the limited ability to train habits in students, whereas his approach taught reason, problem-solving skills, and adaptability, allowing for indefinite growth and improvement.<sup>126</sup> Whereas the training of habits prepares students for certain concrete conditions, he argued education should “prepare students to respond intelligently to new situations.”<sup>127</sup> Dewey broadly this goal as, “to give shape to human powers,”<sup>128</sup> He believed continuous growth was possible when traits of “carefulness, thoroughness, and continuity” were instilled.<sup>129</sup>

Likewise, Suzuki criticized traditional violin training for its limited results in producing technical and musical skills. Suzuki’s goal was “to create outstanding people with brains that work.”<sup>130</sup> In *Where Love Is Deep*, he wrote, “knowledge is mere knowledge, and is not to be confused with ability and skill.”<sup>131</sup> Suzuki’s ultimate goal was not to train professional musicians, though his students did often go on to careers in music. Rather, Suzuki’s theory was that the music he taught was simply a medium through which to train reasoning, character, and happiness.<sup>132</sup> He said, “music exists for the purpose of growing an admirable heart,”<sup>133</sup> and, “as a person works at playing the violin well, he develops the talent to overcome any difficult problem

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<sup>124</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 17–32.

<sup>125</sup> Bruce W. Speck and Sherry L. Hoppe, ed., *Service Learning: History, Theory, and Issues* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 11.

<sup>126</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 52.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>128</sup> Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” 23.

<sup>129</sup> John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1933), 66.

<sup>130</sup> Suzuki, *Young Children’s Talent Education*, 46.

<sup>131</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 43.

<sup>132</sup> Suzuki, *Young Children’s Talent Education*, 51.

<sup>133</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 62.

by working, then the talent will be born to accomplish even the hardest problems easily.”<sup>134</sup>

Suzuki wrote, “Whatever it is fostered by, the ability that a living being has acquired is an asset, it is a strength, part of that person’s entire ability.”<sup>135</sup>

Dewey and Suzuki’s objections to the goals of traditional education can be described using a term that distinguishes Progressive education from traditional education, which is articulated by education professor Patricia Ahlberg Graham (Ahlberg specifies that this includes Deweyan).<sup>136</sup> Progressive education is considered to be “child-centered,” which refers to an emphasis on developing the entire scope of human qualities in a child, beyond a child’s academic or cognitive development. Child-centeredness contrasts with subject-centeredness, which describes traditional education’s focus on the development of academic knowledge and professional skills. And child-centeredness has a second element to it, which Suzuki and Dewey both adhere to. Child-centered education, in addition to developing the entire child’s capacities, must also educate children in ways that children are naturally geared to learn, developmentally and motivationally.

Suzuki and Dewey objected to many of the methods espoused by traditional education, arguing that, while suitable for adults, these methods were ineffective for children, in that they ignored the nature of the child. Foremost, both educators insisted that, for education to be sustainable and successful, top-down, didactic teaching must be eliminated. They argued that direct-instruction styles were unnatural and disagreeable to children, and that they required coercion in order to get children to cooperate. They believed that forcing children was unproductive and de-motivating, and that better methods existed where children would learn well

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 28.

<sup>136</sup> Patricia Albjerg Graham, *Progressive Education from Arcady to Academe: A History of the Progressive Education Association, 1919–1955* (New York, Teachers College Press, 1967), 14.

and willingly. Dewey described ideal education as “a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating, process.”<sup>137</sup> Bruce Speck, in *Service-learning: History, Theory, and Issues*, explains Dewey’s logic: because the acquisition of knowledge, to be applied for future use, is the goal of traditional education, and because traditional education operates usually by didactic means, teachers will struggle to engage students.<sup>138</sup> Dewey described his rejection of traditional methods: “The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. They are beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. Consequently, they must be imposed; even though good teachers will use devices of art to cover up the imposition so as to relieve it of obviously brutal features.”<sup>139</sup>

Suzuki noticed the same issue when he observed top-down teaching. He explained, “If the method of ability development is as natural as in the training of speech, I think no injury can occur there. It is different if you adopt the wrong method by making a child sit at the desk all day in the manner of entrance exam study or by clumsily forcing on him what he dislikes.”<sup>140</sup> Suzuki found his inspiration for child-centered methods by observing how children learn to speak. He said, “I learned that the natural process of teaching a child its mother tongue is a marvelous educational process. It is a natural process in which practice continues from morning till night. The child feels none of the anguish that so often accompanies learning by conventional methods

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<sup>137</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 14–17.

<sup>138</sup> Speck, *Service Learning*, 5.

<sup>139</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 17–32.

<sup>140</sup> Suzuki, *Young Children’s Talent Education*, 49–50.

which are applied to other forms of education. What child would refuse to learn its “mother tongue,” that is, quite this means of education, because they found the routine dull?”<sup>141</sup>

Along with the elimination of traditional modes of transmitting information, Dewey and Suzuki argued it was important to change formal education from an individual process to an interactive process. Both educators noticed that in incidental learning, such as language learning, the setting is always social. They credited social environments with furnishing the motivation for learning, as well as the context to create meaning for knowledge and skills. Dewey wrote in *Democracy and Education*:

When the acquiring of information and of technical intellectual skill do not influence the formation of a social disposition, ordinary vital experience fails to gain in meaning, while schooling, in so far, creates only “sharps” in learning—that is, egoistic specialists. To avoid a split between what men consciously know because they are aware of having learned it by a specific job of learning, and what they unconsciously know because they have absorbed it in the formation of their characters by intercourse with others, becomes an increasingly delicate task with every development of special schooling. (13)

He continued, “I believe that the social life of the child is the basis of concentration, or correlation, in all his training or growth. The social life gives the unconscious unity and the background of all his efforts and of all his attainments.”<sup>142</sup> And Dewey’s commitment to social learning was two-fold. While he believed social learning to be the most effective structure, interactive learning also served his purpose to socially assimilate children. He believed that social learning was a venue for children to become group-minded, in order to have a desire to behave morally and with a value of social service. He wanted his students to “[partake] in the

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<sup>141</sup> Suzuki, *Speeches and Essays*, 20–21.

<sup>142</sup> Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” 20.

interests, purposes, and ideas current in the social group.”<sup>143</sup> His goal was to “[make] the individual a sharer or partner in the associated activity so that he feels its success as his success, its failure as his failure...his beliefs and ideas, in other words, will take a form similar to those of others in the group.”<sup>144</sup> The rest of Dewey’s beliefs on education could not exist without this element of social learning. He stated, “I believe that the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race.”<sup>145</sup>

Suzuki’s reasoning behind interactive learning paralleled Dewey’s in both respects: Suzuki believed that interactive models provided motivation and meaning for learning, and he also taught group-mindedness and assimilation with his approach. Suzuki’s evidence for the need for interaction in learning came from his observations of language-learning. He wrote, “A child does not learn the native tongue only by daily one-to-one training but smoothly and rapidly learns it through talking with others.”<sup>146</sup> He created a process by which young children would be motivated to learn by a desire to interact with others and be able to do what they do. The first step to this process was involving the parent. He explained, “We begin by training the parent rather than the child...First we teach the mother to play one piece... As for the child, we first have him simply listen at home to a record of the piece he will be learning...this principle is very important indeed, because although the parent may want him to do so, a three- or four-year-old child has no desire to learn the violin. The idea is to get the child to say, “I want to play too;” so

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<sup>143</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*.

<sup>144</sup> Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” 23.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>146</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 49.

the first piece is played every day on the gramophone, and in the classroom he just watches the other children (and his mother) having their lessons. The proper environment is created for the child. The child will naturally before long take the violin away from his mother, thinking, “I want to play too.”<sup>147</sup> The second step to the process was to enroll children in group violin lessons. At first, just as the child watched his mother learn to play, he observes group lessons as an outsider. Suzuki explains, “The other children are having fun; he wants to join in the fun. We have caused him to acquire this desire.”<sup>148</sup> The Suzuki Association of the Americas explains Suzuki’s approach further: “children are strongly motivated to learn new skills by watching and listening to other children. There seems to be an instinctive recognition that a task mastered by another person of a similar age must be desirable, achievable and worth pursuing.”<sup>149</sup> In another statement, the Suzuki Association of the Americas explains, “for optimal learning, children need access to an environment where their language is reinforced and shared with others. If the language is not perceived to be relevant in the wider context of life outside the home, it may eventually seem to have little value.”<sup>150</sup> Like Dewey, Suzuki believed social education settings to be the crux of a successful education method. He wrote, “They play with children who are more advanced than they are; the influence is enormous and is marvelous for their training. This is the real talent education.”<sup>151</sup>

In addition to Suzuki’s beliefs about the effectiveness of group learning, Suzuki also shared Dewey’s belief that group learning was necessary for character development, social assimilation,

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<sup>147</sup> Shin’ichi Suzuki, “Instilling the Desire to Learn,” (excerpted from *Nurtured by Love*), Suzuki Association of the Americas, accessed 4 April 2014, <https://suzukiassociation.org/teachers/twinkler/aboutmethod>.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, A4

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 96.



and group-mindedness. Suzuki illustrates the goal of group-mindedness in *Ability Development from Age Zero*, with a story of his student Koji Toyoda, whom at one point he took in his home to live with him:

Koji Toyoda had been my student in Tokyo but the war separated us...Having heard the rumor of Koji being orphaned, I was shocked...I decided to become his foster parent...At that time, my aunt, my younger sister, and her two children were in Kiso Fukushima. We rented the second floor of a house and Koji came to live with us. Unfortunately, Koji had picked up some bad habits with little etiquette during the three years since his parents died. My sister's two children picked up his bad habits. Koji was thought to have a bad influence on them. Then I called a family meeting while the children were at school. I said, "Koji picked up his bad habits naturally while living in Hamamatsu. It is not his fault...We should live an orderly and clean life ourselves before we grumble about him. Everyone listened to my proposal willingly. We all started being careful of our good manners, even to the extent of exchanging greetings and lining up the shoes whenever entering the house...Year by year, Koji adapted to his new environment. Eventually his lifestyle matched our own. He naturally and unconsciously changed so that he did everything properly without having been scolded at all...Man is the son of his environment. (31-33)

Dewey's and Suzuki's beliefs that learning must be developmentally appropriate, agreeable, and social, are a part of a belief that it is an educator's responsibility to observe and deduce a child's motivation and desires, and to cater to them. Both educators believed that the first step to good teaching was careful observation and respect for children's psychology.

Dewey stated, "The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education."<sup>152</sup> In *My Pedagogic Creed*, he wrote, "Children already have learning habits in place when they begin formal education and in order for formal education to be effective, it must cater to children's psychological and cognitive ways of learning...[Education] must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits."<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," 17.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 1-16.

Suzuki advocated the same process. He developed his own method after interacting with and observing groups of children in informal situations, and concluded, “I must think like a child so that I can better communicate with them.”<sup>154</sup> In his book *Ability Development from Age Zero*, he articulated, “skillfulness in rearing a child comes from knowing and feeling as he does in his heart.”<sup>155</sup>

Another essential element of Dewey’s and Suzuki’s child-centered pedagogy was the integration of theory and practice, resulting in the insistence that learning should take place in real-life settings, not through books and abstractions. This element serves both children’s natural modes of skill development and caters to children’s motivational needs. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey wrote, “I believe that education which does not occur through forms of life, forms that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality and tends to cramp and to deaden.”<sup>156</sup> He criticized traditional education’s dry educational processes, both for being disagreeable and for being too remote to be effective. He wrote, “Much which has to be learned is stored in symbols. It is far from translation into familiar acts and objects. Such material is relatively technical and superficial. Taking the ordinary standard of reality as a measure, it is artificial. For this measure is connection with practical concerns. Such material exists in a world by itself, unassimilated to ordinary customs of thought and expression. There is the standing danger that the material of formal instruction will be merely the subject matter of the schools, isolated from the subject matter of life-experience.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, A35.

<sup>155</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 17.

<sup>156</sup> Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” 19.

<sup>157</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 13.

Likewise, Suzuki rejected dry educational methods and abstractions. His approach separated itself from the violin-education approaches that came before him by rejecting the traditional etudes and exercises that formed a substantial part of a violin student's curriculum. He stated, "Life activities develop abilities."<sup>158</sup> He argued that there was a more effective process available, which could be patterned after language learning. He explained, "A baby starts from scratch at birth and by five or six years of age has internalized the [native] language. Here is a wonderful method of education...this event should fit into all education methods."<sup>159</sup> Years later, the Suzuki Association of the Americas published their explanation of Suzuki's philosophy: "Babies are not given special lip or tongue exercises devised by adults to help them with the formation of words...Language "technique" such as lists of ordered vowels or consonant sounds are not assigned...Children learn language by spontaneously and joyfully imitating the language heard around them."<sup>160</sup>

Suzuki was not alone in utilizing the language-learning model and imitation as pedagogical building blocks. In *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey wrote, "Imitation as a means of accomplishment is...an intelligent act. It involves close observation, and judicious selection of what will enable one to do better something which he already is trying to do."<sup>161</sup> He advocated for imitative learning again, saying, "I believe that if nine-tenths of the energy at present directed towards making the child learn certain things, were spent in seeing to it that the child was

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<sup>158</sup> Suzuki, *Speeches and Essays*, 46.

<sup>159</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 5.

<sup>160</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, A4.

<sup>161</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 43.

forming proper images, the work of instruction would be indefinitely facilitated.”<sup>162</sup> On language learning, Dewey wrote,

Since language tends to become the chief instrument of learning about many things, let us see how it works. When the mother is taking the infant out of doors, she says “hat” as she puts something on the baby’s head. Being taken out becomes an interest to the child; mother and child...enjoy it in common.”<sup>163</sup> “the bare fact that language consists of sounds which are mutually intelligible is enough of itself to show that its meaning depends upon connection with a shared experience...The guarantee for the same manner of use is found in the fact that the thing and the sound are first employed in a joint activity, as a means of setting up an active connection between the child and a grownup. Similar ideas or meanings spring up because both persons are engaged as partners in an action where what each does depends upon and influences what the other does.” (Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, pp. 18-19)

Dewey appreciates same benefits of the language-learning process that impress Suzuki. In addition to its age-appropriateness and social nature, both Dewey and Suzuki believed the language process to represent another necessary fact about successful skill development. Both Dewey and Suzuki believed that learning was motivated by the need to adapt to one’s environment for survival. Language is one of the skills children develop to survive—they learn at first to express their needs, and later to cooperate, negotiate, and take care of others. Learning as a survival process is illustrated by John Dewey in *Art as Experience*:

The outline of the common pattern is set by the fact that every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives. A man does something; he lifts, let us say, a stone. In consequence he undergoes, suffers, something: the weight, strain, texture of the surface of the thing lifted. The properties thus undergone determine further doing. The stone is too heavy or too angular, not solid enough; or else the properties undergone show it is fit for the use for which it is intended. The process continues until a mutual adaptation of the self and the object emerges and that particular experience comes

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Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” 21–24.

<sup>163</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 18.

to a close. What is true of this simple instance is true, as to form, of every experience.<sup>164</sup>

Suzuki echoes: “Abilities are born and develop by the workings of the vital forces of an organism as it strives to live and adjust to its environment.”<sup>165</sup> He instructed parents in this principle, and told them how to use this knowledge to educate their children at home. He wrote, “from the day of birth, the body gradually grows, and the child adapts to his environment...For musical ability, play the most beautiful music on records from the day of birth. We develop to different forms dependent upon our environment.”<sup>166</sup>

Dewey and Suzuki applied the same format to formal education, including social interaction in formal education so that students would have the natural motivation to develop the same skills and understanding as the group, which is to say, for survival in the group. Students discover from other students what is possible to achieve, and don’t like to be excluded due to an inability to participate in the subject matter.

Suzuki articulates the same perspective that a person’s need to adapt to their environment is the origin of the human desire and ability to learn. He wrote, “Abilities are born and develop by the workings of the vital forces of an organism as it strives to live and adjust to its environment.”<sup>167</sup> He instructed parents in this principle, and told them how to use this knowledge to educate their children at home. He wrote, “from the day of birth, the body gradually grows, and the child

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<sup>164</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 45.

<sup>165</sup> Suzuki, *The Suzuki Concept*, 13.

<sup>166</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 54–55.

<sup>167</sup> Suzuki, *The Suzuki Concept*, 13.

adapts to his environment...For musical ability, play the most beautiful music on records from the day of birth. We develop to different forms dependent upon our environment.”<sup>168</sup>

Because they believed that the desire and skills for learning are a result of the human need to adapt to environments, both Dewey and Suzuki expressed that it was actually the environment that educates children, and therefore that a well-designed educative environment will produce learning in children without even the aid of instruction or guidance. In her book, *In Search of Music Education*, Music Education professor Estelle Jorgenson notices this parallel between Dewey and Suzuki and defines their resulting education approach as “eduction.” She explains, “The word ‘eduction’ means to draw out, elicit, or develop. Eduction implies that a student’s potential needs only to be drawn out by a teacher who skillfully arranges the external conditions such that growth and development, naturally follow.”<sup>169</sup> Dewey and Suzuki’s methods were not free of guidance or curriculum, and in neither case were children were not left to do as they please in classrooms, with the hopes of producing high achievers. However, both educators did believe strongly in indirect education through a child’s environment, and they went to great lengths to create environments that would stimulate learning.

John Dewey wrote that an educator must “[set] up conditions which stimulate certain visible and tangible ways of acting.”<sup>170</sup> He explained, “Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference. And any environment is a chance environment so far as its educative influence is concerned unless it has

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<sup>168</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 54–55.

<sup>169</sup> Estelle R. Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>170</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1–16.

been deliberately regulated with reference to its educative effect.”<sup>171</sup> He argued that without the correct environment, even the best-designed curriculum would fail. He wrote, “the environment [calls] out certain responses. The required beliefs cannot be hammered in; the needed attitudes cannot be plastered on.”<sup>172</sup> He believed that the teacher’s true, necessary, pedagogical skill was to create situations that would elicit the types of adaptation that constitute achievement. He wrote, “the only way in which adults consciously control the kind of education which the immature get is by controlling the environment in which they act, and hence think and feel. We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment.”<sup>173</sup>

Suzuki agreed that the environment was the key to education, and he espoused “eduction” as his method. He wrote, “Schools instruct and train as hard as they can, without good results...With the emphasis put only on informing and instructing, the actually growing life of the child is ignored. The word education implies two concepts: to “educate,” which means to “bring out, develop from latent or potential existence,” (concise *Oxford English Dictionary*), as well as to instruct.”<sup>174</sup> He agreed that curriculum and/or guidance from teachers were inadequate without a properly designed educative environment. He wrote, “I am convinced that we find no example in which outstanding ability developed without...stimulation toward ability called ‘environment,’ which is its cause.”<sup>175</sup> He defended his position that the interaction between child and environment, not child and book or teacher, was the source of learning: “children live, see, and feel, and their ability develops to fit their surroundings.”<sup>176</sup> Years after Suzuki published this

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 14–29.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>174</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 85.

<sup>175</sup> Suzuki, *Young Children’s Talent Education*, 10.

<sup>176</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 12.

opinion, the Suzuki Association of the Americas explained Suzuki's theory of learning as adaptation: "Babies and young children must hear words and sentences as a natural part of their daily environment if they are to learn to speak in a way that allows them to function productively and happily in society."<sup>177</sup>

Because the school environment is only a minor part of child's life environment, Dewey and Suzuki argued that parents, too, needed to take action to design educative environments for their children at home. Dewey wrote, "An intelligent home differs from an unintelligent one chiefly in that the habits of life and intercourse which prevail are chosen, or at least colored, by the thought of their bearing upon the development of children."<sup>178</sup> Suzuki concurred: "Careless parents do not realize that their children will lose their ability as they grow unless they are exposed to a proper environment."<sup>179</sup>

Dewey's and Suzuki's idea was that children would not only adapt for the better if the environment was better, but also that children would develop negative qualities if the environment was not well designed. Dewey illustrated:

A tribe, let us say, is war-like. The successes for which it strives, the achievements upon which it sets store, are connected with fighting and victory. The presence of this medium incites bellicose exhibitions in a boy, first in games, then in fact when he is strong enough. As he fights he wins approval and advancement; as he refrains, he is disliked, ridiculed, shut out from favorable recognition. It is not surprising that his original belligerent tendencies and emotions are strengthened at the expense of others, and that his ideas turn to things connected with war. Only in this way can he become fully a recognized member of his group. Thus his mental habitudes are gradually assimilated to those of his group.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, A3.

<sup>178</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 23.

<sup>179</sup> Suzuki, *The Suzuki Concept*, 10.

<sup>180</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 18–19.



Suzuki shared a similar illustration in *Ability Development from Age Zero*: “Suppose Mozart had been given to me to care for soon after his birth. And further suppose that instead of having the influence of his wonderful musician father, Mozart heard me play an old, bent, out-of-tune record every day and was raised in this environment. Mozart would have internalized the out-of-tuneness and become a tone deaf person.”<sup>181</sup> Suzuki used this illustration to argue that the way to train good musicians was to have parents expose their children to great recordings from birth.<sup>182</sup> Dewey and Suzuki parallel each other in numerous philosophical and methodological ways, and both educators demonstrate attitudes represented by the Progressive tradition in education. But while Dewey and Suzuki can both be rightly labeled as Progressive, they both set themselves apart from many branches of progressivism, rejecting free-form educational models and progressive trends which put children in charge of their own educational fates. History of education scholar William Reese writes that through the popular press, John Dewey became widely known as the “father of Progressive education,” but that title was neither perfectly deserved or desired by Dewey. While Dewey was perhaps the father of the most dominant strain of progressivism, Dewey also criticized and rejected many Progressives. Bruce Speck explains, “Deweyan Progressivism seeks to alter and expand on traditional educational methods not to reject them outright.”<sup>183</sup> Dewey criticized the unstructured, “sugar-coated” permissiveness of the Romantic-naturalist Progressives like Rousseau.<sup>184</sup> He believed that many Progressives took the principle of education too far, or misunderstood the concept. Dewey wrote in 1963, “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are

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<sup>181</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 8.

<sup>182</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 84.

<sup>183</sup> Speck and Hoppe, *Service Learning*, 10.

<sup>184</sup> Reese, “The Origins of Progressive Education,” 3.

genuinely or equally educative.”<sup>185</sup> Speck wrote, “For Dewey, instruction should give background information, concepts, and theories of use in entering projects, and instruction should construct and advise projects in a way to facilitate their educational value.” Dewey also never put children in charge of their education; while he believed in indirect instruction, he believed that teachers were still responsible for meticulously designing curriculum and methods. When asked if he supported hands-off approaches by teachers, he said no: “On the contrary, basing education upon personal experience may mean more multiplied and more intimate contacts between the mature and the immature than ever existed in the traditional school, and consequently more, rather than less, guidance by others.”<sup>186</sup> Dewey wrote, “Every teacher should recognize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right of social growth.”<sup>187</sup>

Of course, Suzuki has not commonly been labeled a Progressive, and it is therefore unsurprising that he would not align with Romantic-naturalist progressivism. However, it is worth noting that Suzuki not only fits in well with progressivism, but that he fits in well with that specific segment of progressivism that was pervasive in Japanese education culture during his formative years.<sup>188</sup>

The parallels between Dewey’s and Suzuki’s educational approaches are plentiful, as are the parallels between Pestalozzi’s and Suzuki’s approaches. Given the fact that Pestalozzi and Dewey were Westerners, the question naturally arises whether the Suzuki Method is not only Western-influenced, but whether it could be considered non-Eastern or non-Japanese. It would

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<sup>185</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 25.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 17–32.

<sup>187</sup> Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” 23.

<sup>188</sup> Estelle Jorgensen did report a link between Suzuki and Dewey, that both educators methods were “educative” rather than “instructive.” See Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*, 13.

be an incorrect impression, but one could come away with the idea that Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was Westernized and actually lacked Japanese and Eastern cultural features, and therefore the Suzuki Method should be considered simply Western. This is not at all the case.

The influx of Western progressivism in Japan certainly suggests that Suzuki's Progressive approach could be adopted from those Western imports. However, it is equally true that many features of Dewey's and Suzuki's educational designs are dually indigenous to Western Progressivism and traditional Eastern culture. Pestalozzi's or Dewey's ideas were Western in origin, but they were not at cross-purposes with the Japanese culture they entered into in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, Pestalozzi's and Dewey's philosophies had many features that were germane to Japanese thought, and that is exactly why they flourished in Japan. American education scholar, Catherine Lewis explains that the existing philosophical overlap between Western Progressivism and Japanese education philosophy made Japan's adoption of Progressivism an instant success.<sup>189</sup> In her 1995 book *Educating Hearts and Minds: Reflections on Japanese Preschool and Elementary Education*, she writes that in her visits to Japanese classrooms, Japanese teachers described their method as "whole child education," and that they invoked Dewey's name in doing so. She writes, "Countless teachers invoked John Dewey and other Westernness as they explained their classroom practices to me. Yet these ideas may have found extraordinary fertile soil in Japan, where Confucian traditions have long emphasized the inherently ethical and social nature of all learning and where native theories of child development emphasize children's inherent goodness."<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Catherine C. Lewis, *Educating Hearts and Minds: Reflections on Japanese Preschool and Elementary Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 222.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 7.

However, while Lewis argued that Japanese education was naturally compatible with many Western educational approaches, Suzuki scholarship from Lewis's era does not demonstrate the same perspective. On the contrary, Suzuki scholars argued there was a basic incompatibility between Japanese and American educational systems..Suzuki scholar Susan Bauman wrote about the cultural profile of Suzuki's approach, and she recognizes no overlap between Western and Japanese education during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. She wrote, "Suzuki has been highly influenced by an Eastern culture which values character training not only for the good of the individual but for the good of the whole society. These Eastern ideals then are inherent within the Talent Education method and philosophy and are often the reason for the criticism of the Suzuki Method in Western Countries."<sup>191</sup> Bauman's concern about the rejection of Eastern principles by Americans is confirmed by Merry White in *The Japanese Educational Challenge*, where White states that Americans are quick to reject education models they deem "Japanese."<sup>192</sup> While Bauman and White's observations that Americans tend to reject Japanese cultural paradigms seem valid, those observations seem moot in relation to the Suzuki Method, when it is understood that the Suzuki Method has so much Western cultural basis.

Bauman's claims are further undermined by the fact that Suzuki is documented for crediting two educators from the Western Progressive tradition as specific influences on his pedagogy, coming from Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget. Suzuki did not explain where he came across those influences, but they were present in Japanese culture, to a lesser extent than Pestalozzi and Dewey.

An interesting trend comes to light when comparing the similarities between the Progressives

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<sup>191</sup> Bauman, *Japanese Spirit*, 8.

<sup>192</sup> White, *Japanese Educational Challenge*, 139, 145–53, 187–89.

that Suzuki credited as influences, and those he did not. Suzuki mentions Montessori and Piaget as influences on his teaching, but as the forthcoming discussion shows, his pedagogy is far less similar to those educators than to Pestalozzi or Dewey. Montessori puts children in charge; Suzuki does not. Piaget is primarily interested in limitations of children's cognition at certain phases; Suzuki never discusses age as a limitation on ability. Suzuki's pedagogy is more similar to Dewey and Pestalozzi, who were the Western Progressives who were the most pervasive in Japanese education. He may have taken notice of Montessori and Piaget as unique and innovative, but Dewey and Pestalozzi are so similar to Suzuki in so many ways that it suggests they were a part of his original mindset. While a discussion of the parallels between Suzuki and Montessori and Piaget is pertinent, the reader should notice the relative dissimilarity between Suzuki and these progressives compared with those previously discussed.

### **SUZUKI AND MONTESSORI**

Maria Montessori was yet another Western Progressive influence who became popular in the Japanese educational system in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>193</sup> The Montessori Method embodies the child-centeredness of Western Progressivism in both Romantic and pragmatic ways. Unlike the natural-learning based observation/imitation/cycle of Johann Pestalozzi's approach or the guided group work of John Dewey's education, Maria Montessori put children at the helm of their education. The likenesses between the Suzuki Method and the Montessori Method are plentiful, but so are the differences.

Some comparisons between Suzuki and Montessori have been made. In Landers' book, *The Talent Education School of Shin'ichi Suzuki: An Analysis*, he argues that there is significant

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<sup>193</sup> Beauchamp, *Education in Japan*, 63, 224d.

common ground between the two approaches. Also in Alice Ward's Master's thesis, *Suzuki and Montessori: Approaches to Early Childhood Education*, Ward outlines areas where the two educators are in strong agreement in ways that set themselves apart from traditional education.

Suzuki and Montessori shared the common Progressive belief that experience, not memorization or abstract learning, was the most effective educational tool.<sup>194</sup> Both educators took the approach that education should cater to the child's natural modes of learning, rather than handing down information as adults learn. Both educators also believed that observing and deducing information about the nature of the child should provide the starting material for curriculum. Montessori wrote, "Studying [the child] means we do not try to teach it, we learn from it instead. We learn from this living organism, the child, its needs and tendencies. Only when we know the child's needs can we begin to learn to cater to them." This strongly echoes Suzuki's words when he said, "I must think like a child so that I can better communicate with them."<sup>195</sup> Likewise in Suzuki's book *Ability Development from Age Zero*, he stated, "skillfulness in rearing a child comes from knowing and feeling as he does in his heart."<sup>196</sup>

Suzuki and Montessori shared the belief that education must capitalize on the child's earliest years, to indirectly educate them through environmental exposure. Montessori described ages birth through six years old as the years of the "absorbent mind," and she advocated for appropriate exposures to language and sensory education.<sup>197</sup> Suzuki mirrors this attitude in *Nurtured by Love*, where he instructs parents to expose children to fine music, and not to expose them to poor music, from birth, because children are gaining aural skills unconsciously, for

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<sup>194</sup> Alice Ward, "Suzuki and Montessori: Approaches to Early Childhood Education" (MM thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1983).

<sup>195</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, A35.

<sup>196</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, a17.

<sup>197</sup> Ward, "Suzuki and Montessori," 8–11.

better or worse, depending on their exposure.<sup>198</sup>

Suzuki and Montessori, like other Progressives, shared the belief that the environment was responsible for learning. Alice Ward writes that Montessori, like Suzuki, believed that children learn best through natural interaction with their environment. Ward writes that a Montessori education features designed educational environments, with an emphasis on positive and supportive actions from adults. Montessori believed that without the correct educational environment, “the child has no growth potential whatsoever.”<sup>199</sup> Montessori’s writings are reminiscent of Suzuki’s attitude that the environment produces results in the child for better or worse—remember Suzuki’s argument that Mozart, had he been raised in a non-musical home, would have become a non-musical or even tone-deaf person.<sup>200</sup> Montessori education allows children to grow at their own pace, similar to the Suzuki Method. Also like the Suzuki Method, Montessori honors children’s desires and never forces children to learn. However, there is a critical difference between Montessori’s approach and Suzuki’s. The Montessori Method allows children to learn at will, what they want, when they want.<sup>201</sup> Montessori wrote, “When—and only when—the child is ready and interested, he is invited to explore a particular... apparatus, to use it as often and as long as he wishes, and so to master a skill meaningful to him at the moment.”<sup>202</sup>

While Suzuki is sensitive to children’s desire and motivation to learn, his method is rigorously structured; children do not even learn a piece from the Suzuki repertoire out of order from the prescribed sequence. In *Where Love Is Deep*, Suzuki stressed that children should not

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<sup>198</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 13–16.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>201</sup> Ward, “Suzuki and Montessori.”

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 12.

be forced to learn music, and that lesson should begin only when the child expresses the desire to play. However, Suzuki never speaks of the possibility that a child might not ever want to play the violin. Instead, he focuses on engineering the conditions to inspire children's desire, by exposing them to other children playing, and by having them observe their parents learning the violin.<sup>203</sup>

Overall, while Suzuki and Montessori share the basic child-centeredness which is the hallmark of Progressivism, the Suzuki Method and the Montessori Method offer vastly different educations, and reflect different attitudes toward children, teachers, knowledge acquisition, and teaching methods. The Montessori Method's characteristic of children's self-directed learning makes it nearly impossible to categorize the Suzuki Method and the Montessori Method together. Rather, the Montessori Method fits well among free-form Romantic, Rousseauian approaches, which contrast sharply from the goal-oriented approaches of Deweyan Progressives.

It is noteworthy that Suzuki credited Montessori as an influence, given that Montessori is Western and Progressive. Many have found this an interesting link—particularly, without the information that Western Progressivism was a trend in Japan, this connection seems striking and important. American Suzuki pedagogue John Kendall suggested that Suzuki's exposure to Montessori's methods were a Western influence, taken from his eight years in Germany, and imposed on what he believed to be an otherwise non-Western approach.<sup>204</sup> However, understanding that the Montessori Method was present in Japan during Suzuki's youth makes it less surprising that he could have known about the method. Moreover, the lesser similarities between Suzuki and Montessori, compared to Suzuki and Pestalozzi or Dewey, make it less important that Suzuki credited Montessori at all, no matter where he encountered Montessori's

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<sup>203</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 49.

<sup>204</sup> Kendall, "Suzuki's Mother Tongue Method," 43.



method.

## **SUZUKI AND PIAGET**

Suzuki expressed admiration for another Western progressive, Jean Piaget. Like Pestalozzi, Montessori, and Dewey, Piaget was a prevalent force in Japanese education during the 1920s in Japan.<sup>205</sup> Piaget was a Swiss psychologist who developed theories of learning and child development, based on his psychology training and direct observations and interactions with children. Suzuki cited Piaget as an influence. However, as with Montessori, Suzuki and Piaget share relatively few commonalities.

Carol Garhart Mooney explains Piaget's theories in her book, *Theories of childhood: an Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget, and Vygotsky*. Mooney explains that Piaget stressed foremost that children do not learn through direct instruction. Rather, Piaget argued that children learn through interaction with their surroundings. Suzuki's philosophy imitates this perspective directly. These points are certainly in line with the Suzuki Method, but no more so than they are in line with Pestalozzi, Dewey, and Montessori.

Piaget, like Dewey, objected to direct instruction on the grounds that without real-life context, knowledge had no meaning. One of Piaget's best-known sayings is, "construction is superior to instruction."<sup>206</sup> Suzuki, likewise, insisted that "life activities develop abilities," and that learning did not successfully take place through verbal descriptions and abstract technical exercises but through real-life observations, demonstrations, and imitation, and through listening to and playing real music. Piaget stated that by interacting with people, places, and objects,

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<sup>205</sup> Kato and Katnii, "Piaget's Constructivism and Childhood Education in Japan," 209–20.

<sup>206</sup> Carol Garhart Mooney, *Theories of Childhood: An Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget and Vygotsky* (St. Paul: Redleaf Press, 2000), 79.

children construct knowledge by assigning meaning to new phenomena in relation to concepts they already understand. This unique Piagetan concept of “scaffolding” knowledge is the element most significantly similar to the Suzuki Method; Suzuki insisted that each step of the learning process be fully mastered before moving on to another step, so that a new concept or skill always had a secure base to be integrated into.

Also like Suzuki, Piaget advocated that play should be an essential element of formal education—this is also characteristic of the Montessori Method.<sup>207</sup> For Piaget, symbolic play, or “pretend,” was important. Mooney describes Piaget’s philosophy that children engaging in symbolic play are learning through the natural mode of imitating the world around them, they absorb the concepts they observe in their environments. Suzuki, too, used symbolic play in his teaching. William Starr, in his book, *The Suzuki Violinist: A Guide for Teachers and Parents*, quotes Suzuki, teaching a student to manipulate his tone through bow weight: “You carry an elephant with your bow. Now carry a mouse!”<sup>208</sup>

On the other hand, Suzuki and Piaget differ in their attitudes toward children’s developmental growth. Piaget defined certain “stages of development” and identified the capacities children possessed during certain age ranges. Suzuki, by contrast, insisted that children learn at very different paces. While Suzuki may have been interested in Piaget’s identification of the stages children grow through, his philosophy represented a different conclusion.

The two educators focused on different aspects of education. Suzuki aligns strongly with Dewey, who took a broad philosophical approach that resulted in methodological

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<sup>207</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 15–21.

<sup>208</sup> William J. Starr, *The Suzuki Violinist: A Guide for Teachers and Parents* (Miami: Summy-Birchard, 2000).

recommendations. Piaget, however, was more focused on knowledge-acquisition processes and how children advance cognitive-psychologically through the stages of childhood. Though Suzuki credits Piaget as an educational theorist he admired, the similarities are limited compared with other approaches present in Suzuki's environment.

Among historical Progressive approaches, the Suzuki Method aligns well with the basic principles of child-centeredness, including natural learning, active learning, and interactive learning. In particular, it aligns well with the pragmatist approach of John Dewey, who held specific cognitive and non-cognitive goals for education and achieved those goals through hands-on, interactive methods. While it is known that Suzuki knew of and approved of the Progressive approaches of Montessori and Piaget, even stronger parallels are found between Suzuki's educational theory and the most pervasive Progressive theories in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese education. Comparisons between the Suzuki Method and historically-informed, selected Progressive approaches reveal that Suzuki's approach not only has significant Western basis, but that the Suzuki's method should be associated with a specific segment of Western Progressivism, namely with the most dominant Progressive approaches in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japan, begun by Pestalozzi and continued by Dewey.

## **THE SUZUKI METHOD AND CONTEMPORARY PROGRESSIVISM**

Both the Suzuki Method and Progressive education have naturally evolved since Suzuki's lifetime and since the lifetime of Pestalozzi, Dewey, Montessori, and Piaget. But both the Suzuki Method and Progressivism remain tied to traditions and principles from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the link between the origins of Suzuki Method and historical Progressivism certainly re-frame the Suzuki Method in the context of American educational approaches, a contemporary look at the Suzuki Method and today's progressivism is necessary in order to determine whether

the Suzuki Method in America today belongs a member of the various Progressive approaches practiced in the United States.

John Love, writing for the National Association of Independent Schools, states that while Progressive education in the United States takes diverse and numerous forms, today's American Progressives share roots in John Dewey's progressivism as their common trait. Nancy Nager, an education professor and developmental psychologist at the Bank Street College of Education, writes that today's Progressives often present their educational models as modern and original, but that Progressive education today can be, and is best understood, when it is traced back to its early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Progressive roots, which center around John Dewey, his colleagues, and his followers through the 20<sup>th</sup> century to today.

While Progressive and traditional education in the United States have both changed since Dewey's lifetime, Love illustrates that the distinctions between contemporary progressivism and contemporary "traditional" education parallel the differences between Progressive and traditional education from the early and mid-1900s. Another prolific author on Progressive education, Alfie Kohn, wrote an article describing the core tenets of contemporary Progressives; like Love, he uses the nomenclature "Progressive" versus "traditional," and he also invokes Dewey's words in his explanations Progressive principles.

The Suzuki Method, too, has evolved since its early stages, and since the death of Shin'ichi Suzuki in 1997. The Suzuki Association of the Americas offers teacher training for new Suzuki teachers, offered primarily by American teacher-trainers who studied directly with Suzuki, who share a commitment both to preserve Suzuki's legacy and to innovate and improve upon current educational methods continuously, just as Suzuki frequently voiced that he was committed to do. The Suzuki Association of the Americas is not isolated from its international partners, including

Japan's Suzuki Association, called the Japanese Talent Education Research Institute. Recent publications in the Suzuki field reflect modern educational influences; the primer for Suzuki teacher trainees and new Suzuki parents includes a section on "learning styles," a concept that originated in the 1970s and is now common to traditional and Progressive education alike.<sup>209</sup>

Progressive education and the Suzuki Method have inevitably evolved over time, but what remains is a strong alignment between the Suzuki Method and Progressivism, which still contrasts sharply with traditional methods, criticized by today's Progressives including Love and Kohn just as Dewey criticized traditional education in his generation.

In an article for the National Association of Independent Schools, Love gives a detailed illustration of the contrasts between the traditional education offered in today's public schools and the Progressive approaches offered by a variety of institutions. While he acknowledges differences exist between Progressive approaches, he sets forth the core principles he believes to represent the range of Progressive approaches that exist today. Love's statements are echoed both by Suzuki's writings from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Suzuki Association of the Americas' statements in their contemporary published literature.

Love writes that in Progressive education, school is a "part of life," where as traditional education treats school as a "preparation" for life. Suzuki's attitude toward lifelong learning reflects the anti-traditional view that education is preparing for a later life; he said, "I will be a student until I am 90 years old; then I will be a teacher."<sup>210</sup> Kohn expresses progressivism in terms of "whole child" education. He writes, "Progressive educators are concerned with helping

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<sup>209</sup> Harold Pashler, et al., "Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 9, no. 3 (December 2008): 105–19.

<sup>210</sup> Timmerman, *Kreisler Highway*, 49.

children become not only good learners but also good people.”<sup>211</sup> Suzuki’s words align strongly with the Progressives. He wrote, “Talent Education does not only apply to knowledge or technical skill but also to morality, building character, and appreciating beauty.... Our movement does not mean to raise so-called prodigies. We must express it in other words as a ‘total human education.’”<sup>212</sup> Suzuki also said, “we are not teaching these children to become professional musicians. I believe that sensitivity and love toward music or art are very important things to all people whether they are politicians, scientist, businessmen or laborers. They are the things that make our lives rich. I am praying that the day will come when people all over the world will have truth, righteousness and beauty in their lives.”<sup>213</sup>

Love demonstrates that, like previous centuries’ Progressive models, modern progressive approaches make children active participants in day-to-day learning and give children a voice in designing their educational plan. Love contrasts this idea with traditional education, where “learners are passive absorbers of information and authority.” In the Suzuki Method, children begin at very young ages, but even with children under three years old, the Suzuki Method teaches children only when they express a personal interest in the violin. It may seem contradictory that Suzuki students could be steering their own education, when they begin at barely-verbal ages. Ed Sprunger dissects this apparent contradiction, saying: “A child who can’t play the violin is not in a position to choose to play the violin; a child who can play the violin is. You will be preparing your child to make a genuine choice.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Alfie Kohn, “Progressive Education: Why It’s Hard to Beat, but Also Hard to Find,” *Independent School* (Spring 2008), <http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/Progressive.htm>.

<sup>212</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 7.

<sup>213</sup> Shin’ichi Suzuki, 1956, quoted by Cook, *Suzuki in Action*, 16.

<sup>214</sup> Edmund Sprunger, *Building Violin Skills: A Set of Plans Designed to Help Parents and Children Construct Positive Practices* (St. Louis: Yes Publishing, 2012), 27.

Contemporary Progressive education preserves Dewey's belief that the home must be an intelligent and educative environment, and that parents are responsible for the home education of their children. Love contrasts this Progressive principle with traditional education, whereby parents are outsiders and are minimally involved in their children's education. Love writes that in traditional education, teachers are the primary sources of information, and they possess the entire authority to design and evaluate a student's learning. By contrast, in Progressive education, he states that teachers work cooperatively with parents and students to design curricula and to individualize education to a student's learning style and pace. To quote Love, in Progressive education, "Parents are the primary teachers, goal setters, and planners, and serve as resources."

The Suzuki Association of the Americas also features the Progressive principle that parents are to be continuously involved in their children's education, providing feedback that helps to design a student's curricula and pace. The Suzuki Association of the Americas refers to the "Suzuki Triangle," which describes the teacher-student-parent relationship in Suzuki education. The SAA refers to the triangle as "equilateral—each [member] has equal importance."<sup>215</sup> The Suzuki Method has not changed in this respect from its inception. Suzuki wrote, "fathers and mothers are the main persons in education. Who else fosters their own children but parents? The responsibility and joy both belong to parents. Those who assist in it are teachers; hence teachers are supposed to cooperators."<sup>216</sup> And children are not passive in designing their educational path, though they are not in charge, either. Suzuki Teacher-trainer Tanya Carey says that the student

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<sup>215</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, 11.

<sup>216</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 123.

has the responsibility to communicate to parent and teacher to “ask for what [they] need,”<sup>217</sup> and Ray Landers writes that a crucial element in Suzuki teaching is to have regular discussions with the child about their needs and feelings.<sup>218</sup> Parent and teacher work together to be sensitive to and cooperate with the student’s motivation. Suzuki believed that this cooperation was necessary for learning to succeed, “An adult can control his mind to act when there is something he must do... Young children, we have to be aware, are completely different. They don’t “do things because they have to.’ They live in a natural world where they “do things they feel like doing.”<sup>219</sup>

In addition to parent involvement and the cooperative role of parent and teacher, contemporary Progressive education and the Suzuki Method also contrast with traditional education, in that they insist that the community, not just the educators and administration, must function as part of students’ educational environment. According to Love, in traditional education, the community is separate from education, with the exception of its involvement in funding. The Suzuki Method works to extend educational experiences beyond the walls of the Suzuki school and the home, to include outside community experiences to create context and meaning for the music skills they teach. Ray Landers writes that the Suzuki Method operates by the “use of an organized instructional system that incorporates semiprivate lessons, group classes, parent meetings, and recitals.”<sup>220</sup> The Suzuki Association of the Americas states:

While the Suzuki Method is very dependent on upon the intimate one-to-one, careful working with the individual child by both teacher and parent, it also recognizes the enormous influence that the peer community has on a child’s

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<sup>217</sup> Tanya Carey, “Every Child Can!” Professional Development Seminar for the Suzuki Association of the Americas Glen Ellyn, IL, 12 July 2012.

<sup>218</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 58.

<sup>219</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 48.

<sup>220</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 20.



development. Music education does not happen only in the confines of the classroom.... There are many ways in which this contact with peers and the sharing of music with them can be organized, and the method will vary with the instruments being studied and the particular mix of student playing levels as well as with the teacher's own preferences. But some regular group experience in which children can watch and listen to each other essential. Children learn to offer mutual support, to be sensitive and courteous to others. They learn about appropriate audience behavior. They learn that others are confronting all the same challenges, enjoying the same triumphs, and sometimes even coping with the same frustrations that they are facing. And parents, too, benefit from the opportunity to see how other families share the same values and ideals that they have committed themselves to in the Suzuki community.<sup>221</sup>

Along with the cooperative relationship between parent, student, and teacher, and with community involvement, Progressive education features an alternative structure from traditional education, where decision making about the overall structure and official policies and procedures of the education system is a shared task by all involved parties, administrative, faculty, parents, and students. Love describes this structure and contrasts with traditional education, where decisions are made and handed down by administrative parties. Likewise, the Suzuki Association of the Americas is governed by a board of directors that includes teachers, parents, and other professionals, to incorporate breadth and balance of factors in deciding on policies and procedures for Suzuki education.<sup>222</sup>

Love writes that while large-scale decisions in traditional education are administratively decided upon, small-scale program decisions are likewise designed without the involvement of teachers, parents, or students. He explains that in traditional scenarios, “[programs are] determined by external criteria, particularly test results.” However in Progressive education, Love states that “[programs are] determined by mission, philosophy, and goals for graduates.”

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<sup>221</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, A19.

<sup>222</sup> “About the Suzuki Association of the Americas,” Suzuki Association of the Americas, accessed 14 March 2014, <https://suzukiassociation.org/about>.

The Suzuki approach parallels the Progressive approach. While the repertoire is meticulously ordered, the Suzuki curriculum is not synonymous with the Suzuki Repertoire. Success for Suzuki education is not determined by the advancement of a student through the ten volumes of repertoire, but by the development of musical, cognitive, non-cognitive, and interpersonal skills. There are no externally measured age-related or graded benchmarks for students to achieve. Rather, progress is determined on an individual basis according to the goals determined for each student by his teacher, parents, and himself.

Just as the reasons behind program learning goals contrast between Progressive and traditional education, Love states that a contrast exists in the shape of the curriculum between traditional and Progressive institutions. He states that traditional education's programs comprise a linear progression ever-growing knowledge and skill mastery. This contrasts with Progressive education, where Love says "Learning is spiral, with depth and breadth as goals." Suzuki identified these two shapes when he designed the Suzuki Method, too, and he rejected the linear model. Suzuki described the difference between linear and spiral learning as 1) to "teach and advance," or 2) to "foster ability with attention to its gradual increase." Suzuki writes, "It is the clumsy teacher who thinks, as is commonly thought, that when the student understands the material, the teacher's duty is over and it is time to go on to the next lesson...from the viewpoint of what strength a child can develop through this, the result is miserable."<sup>223</sup> Suzuki argued that instead of teaching and advancing, one must aim to foster ability with attention to its gradual increase."<sup>224</sup> The Suzuki Method exemplifies spiral learning in its basic design: Suzuki students don't "move on" from one repertoire piece to the next as they advance as players. Rather, Suzuki

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<sup>223</sup> Suzuki, *Young Children's Talent Education*, 32–33.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

students constantly review and refine all pieces in their repertoire, in order to achieve a deeper of understanding of previously learned concepts, and to simultaneously add incorporate new skills into mastered repertoire. The Suzuki Association of the Americas states, “Suzuki’s insistence on review as a regular and important part of every practice session and every lesson has a...purpose: review playing of previously learned repertoire is an essential component in the search for excellence. Students are expected to revisit the repertoire again and again, bringing their ever-increasing skills and insights to the music as they reach toward higher and higher technical and artistic standards.”<sup>225</sup>

Love also states that the most basic and practical, methodological aspects of traditional and Progressive education contrast in the same way today as they did during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In traditional education today, just as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, students learn through textbooks, lectures, worksheets and testing, including standardized testing. By contrast, Progressive education has always maintained that learning must happen through forms of life, and that learning must take place in the context of games and play, social interaction, and real-life experiences. The Suzuki Method today has maintained the same values about active learning as Suzuki presented when he originally designed his method. Suzuki described his method as “education through living situations.”<sup>226</sup> Referencing the language learning analogy as the basis of his method, Suzuki said, “We don’t learn to speak by *Etuden*.”<sup>227</sup> Ray Landers cites the use of games, the element of

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<sup>225</sup> Suzuki Association of the Americas, *Every Child Can!*, A13–A14.

<sup>226</sup> Cook, *Suzuki in Action*, 32.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

frequent, formal and informal performances, and the importance of group lessons as core pedagogical features of the Suzuki Method.<sup>228</sup>

Love also notes that because of the linear, benchmarked progression of traditional education, disciplines such as math, science and languages are unavoidably separated, and the skills taught toward mastery of each discipline are taught discretely and seen as the goals of education. He contrasts this with Progressive education, where advancement is not linearly benchmarked and progress is not determined by testing, disciplines present themselves as blended and overlapping, and skills learned are a means toward broader goals but not ends in themselves. Likewise in Suzuki education, mastery of individual techniques is not structured in the same order or at the same pace for every student, and individual skills are not end goals but tools in service of ever-increasing performance and expressive ability. Furthermore, technique instruction is not separated from repertoire instruction; Suzuki teachers teach technique in the context of students' performance repertoire. Other skills, explains Landers explains in *The Talent Education School of Shin'ichi Suzuki*, are interspersed as needed on an individual basis dependent on the student's level and ability. He writes, "Note reading...general rules for scales, chords, and theory at the times...[are introduced when] they will help with his music-making rather than being ends in themselves."<sup>229</sup>

Love cites student assessment as another area where traditional and Progressive education contrast. In traditional education, students learning is graded according to decided-upon norms, and which are determined by external parties and which are expressed through grades.

Progressive education is much less regulated: Progressive educators assess individual students'

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<sup>228</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 15–21.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

learning in a variety of ways and focuses on the individual student's progress rather than an norm-referenced achievement. The Suzuki Method likewise assesses progress in a variety of forms, from informal verbal feedback throughout lessons to the Suzuki graduation system. The graduation system is little understood by outsiders of the Suzuki Method. The "Graduation System" is perhaps the most misleading name for the best illustration of Progressive-style student learning assessment. The Suzuki Method is known for its ordered repertoire, and completion of a Suzuki book is a mark of achievement for a student. However, there are no central criteria for graduation from a Suzuki book, and there is no norm-referenced grading system which allows students to graduate or holds them back. Rather, a teacher moves students through the repertoire according to the student's learning needs and individual pace. Upon completion of a volume of literature, the Suzuki teacher will decide that the student may perform a "book recital," where the entire book is performed for friends, family, or the student's peers at the Suzuki school. There are no technical standards that must be met in order for a teacher to advance a student from one piece or book to the next, though of course, there are specific techniques featured in each piece that a student should be capable of performing in order to study a given piece. However, skills like vibrato, spiccato, and shifting may be introduced at different times by different teachers; the result is that one student's Book 3 recital may feature more advanced technique than another. During Suzuki's lifetime, "book recitals" were actually "book recordings": students would record a performance of their completed book to send to Suzuki personally for his narrative feedback. Suzuki would record response tapes, evaluating the performance according to what progress or focus he felt should be the student's next step upon completion of a volume of literature. No grades or pass/fail were assigned, however. A former student of Suzuki, Masaaki Honda, explains that the ordered repertoire and graduation system

are not intended to be a grading system: “Though there is no end in the world of arts or education, we thought it important to encourage the parents and children. Setting up a high aim and trying to gain this peak would make it easier for people to attempt it.”

Love writes that traditional, norm-referenced assessment is competitively based, and allows for direct comparison between students. By contrast, Love writes that in Progressive education, success is determined by improvement over time, not by discrete accomplishments, and that collaboration, not competition, is encouraged. Constance Starr, the first president and co-founder of the Suzuki Association of the Americas, explains that the Suzuki Method also discourages competition and comparison between students, and that success is a long-term project. She writes, “Although competition permeates every facet of life, it is not considered to be a source of motivation in Suzuki training. Teacher or parent should never compare one child with another. The child should be taught from the beginning that any competition is only with himself, that he must practice and work hard to play as well as he possibly can.”<sup>230</sup>

Competition is less relevant in Progressive and Suzuki education than it is in traditional education, because as Love points out, in traditional education, “products,” by which he means knowledge and skills, are the goal, whereas in Progressive education, he writes that “products are subsumed by process considerations.” This Progressive attitude is strongly represented in the Suzuki approach. Suzuki’s goal was not to create professional musicians, nor was any musical or technical product his end goal. Suzuki stated, “I just want to make good citizens. If a child hears good music from the day of his birth, and learns to play it himself, he develops sensitivity,

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<sup>230</sup> Landers, *Talent Education School*, 141.

discipline, and endurance. He gets a beautiful heart.”<sup>231</sup> Clifford Cook commented about Suzuki, “In teaching as in living, he puts the heart before the course.”<sup>232</sup>

Finally, Love states that traditional education differs from Progressive education in its attitude that school is a task rather than a pleasure, whereas in Progressive education, there is an emphasis on fun for the child to engage the child in challenging work in a positive way. Suzuki took the same Progressive approach. In *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki writes, “We encourage them to think of violin training as fun.”<sup>233</sup> The social aspect of the Suzuki method is great fuel toward this goal. Suzuki wrote, “It’s a great joy for [children] to play with friends. They start to play vigorously as if waking from slumber.”<sup>234</sup> TERI, the Suzuki Association of Japan, states that in Suzuki training, one must “Never force children to practice or rehearse.”<sup>235</sup> To force children to work, to work contrary to the student’s motivation, contradicts Suzuki’s natural learning model.

## ***CHAPTER 2—CONCLUSION***

Numerous elements of Suzuki’s pedagogy have been ascribed to Japanese traditions by American Suzuki insiders and outsiders, based on only limited cultural information about the Suzuki Method and its background. The perception that the Suzuki Method contradicts American educational ideals is the result of a lack of information about Suzuki’s intellectual and cultural background; that perception also rings of latent prejudices held by many Americans about Japanese education and culture during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. American music teachers and parents who have shied away from the Suzuki Method have accused Suzuki pedagogy of

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<sup>231</sup> Cook, *Suzuki in Action*, 76.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>233</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 95–96.

<sup>234</sup> Suzuki, *Where Love Is Deep*, 49.

<sup>235</sup> “The Basic Principles of the Suzuki Method Using the Mother Tongue Approach,” Talent Education Research Institute, accessed 14 March 2014, [http://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/E\\_mthd112.html](http://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/E_mthd112.html).

encouraging “robot-like” imitation rather than musical playing, have criticized the method for teaching obedience rather than reason, technique rather than art, and have de-valued the individual in favor of a homogenized, one-size-fits-all teaching. However, that reputation of the Suzuki Method is neither supported by Suzuki’s words, nor by his intellectual and cultural biography.

While, at the time, commentary supporting that reputation of the Suzuki Method was based in certain factual perceptions about Japanese education, those facts were not the historically appropriate facts to use to make judgments about the nature of the Suzuki Method. Given that many Americans deplore the idea of students being taught a rigid curriculum in a competitive environment, en masse using a single-track education system, it was understandable that even educators who saw the Suzuki Method as successful and who saw Suzuki as an exemplary educator would have had concerns about the social and cultural appropriateness of the Suzuki Method in America.

However, the historical link and the philosophical and methodological parallels between the Suzuki Method and early 20th-century Western Progressivism should cause string pedagogues and members of the string performance community to re-examine their beliefs about the various pedagogical and philosophical elements of the Suzuki Method: group work; character and personality development; holistic education; efforts toward social assimilation; the integration of technique instruction with performance-skill development (generically, the integration of theory and practice); and the use of imitation and repetition all belong equally to the Western Progressive and the Suzuki Method. The Suzuki Method should not only be counted among approaches influenced by major Western Progressives, it should be treated by those teaching the method and parents who choose to enroll their children in Suzuki education as a Progressive



option.

# **CHAPTER 3: PARALLEL CAUSATION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND METHODS IN SUZUKI AND TRADITIONAL EUROPEAN VIOLIN PEDAGOGY**

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Traditional violin pedagogy and Suzuki violin pedagogy are known for having different philosophies and methods. This chapter addresses a previously undiscussed parallel between traditional and Suzuki curricula. While each group's philosophies and methods are known among the string community, this chapter argues that the relationship between each tradition's philosophy and methods is causal: Attitudes held by traditional pedagogues and by Shin'ichi Suzuki about natural talent, and about the difficulty of playing the violin, produced the methods that define the approach.

The causal relationship between Suzuki's philosophy and methods is widely known: Suzuki's belief that all children have talent inspired him to invent methods that would bring out this supposed universal talent. For traditional teaching, the same causation has not been discussed, but I argue that the same pattern exists: The ubiquity of complex, abstruse didactic materials, which make no aim to engage the child but to train technique, reflect the traditional belief that rare, inborn talent is the key to surmounting the inherent difficulty of playing the violin. This chapter explains the philosophies behind Suzuki and traditional teaching; it shows how those philosophies relate to their technique-training methods; and it demonstrates sample paths to technical competency using each approach. From reading this chapter, readers will understand that subscribing to one school of pedagogy or the other can, consciously, accurately, or not, reflect a mindset toward the nature of talent and the nature of learning to play the violin. Though not explicitly discussed in this chapter, readers should also notice that the differences

between traditional violin technique instruction and Suzuki technique instruction represent the same differences between the progressive and traditional educational approaches outlined in Chapter 2.

### ***ORIGINS AND COMPARISON OF SUZUKI AND TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND METHODS***

Just as Suzuki's pedagogy differed from mainstream, Meiji-era educational models, resembling more his contemporaries of the Western Progressive trend, Suzuki's violin pedagogy also set itself apart from traditional European approaches of the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The European conservatory traditions of Russia, Germany, France, Belgium, and England featured a common core of philosophical and methodological features, all of which Suzuki rejected.

Though the national schools of violin pedagogy in Europe began as discrete schools, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century they had well begun to cross-pollinate. Otakar Ševčík, for example, had taught in Kiev, Salzburg, Vienna, Prague, and in the United States by the early 1920s, and his technique texts had been published across Europe and in the United States by 1918. Joseph Joachim, who taught Suzuki's teacher, Karl Klingler, also taught well-known French, American, and Hungarian students, most notably Leopold Auer, who then studied with Joachim in a German conservatory and later taught the most famous Russian violinists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the blending of traditions by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the European and American conservatory traditions can be referred to as the "traditional approach," referring not only to the relative unity of approaches but also to the worldwide dominance of the approach.

Suzuki had more than passing exposure to Western pedagogical approaches. Though he began his studies in an unusual fashion, beginning by teaching himself for several months age 17

before seeking formal lessons, he later studied for eight years in Berlin with German violinist Karl Klingler.<sup>236</sup> Suzuki succeeded in learning under European Conservatory system, but he found mainstream approaches to be ineffectual for young students. Suzuki identified flawed beliefs and methods of traditional teaching systems, and offered what he believed to be a corrected perspective.

Suzuki was struck by the pervasive attitude among European Conservatory teachers that high ability was a result of inborn natural talent, and that the rarity of high musical achievement reflected the rarity of natural talent. Evidence of this attitude is evidenced by renowned violin pedagogue Leopold Auer's words: "One great mistake lies in the failure of so large a majority of those who decide to devote themselves to music...to ascertain at the very outset whether nature has adequately supplied them with the necessary tools for what they have in mind...From far and near people came to get my opinion regarding the talent shown by young aspirants to fame. In many cases, where it was plain that the lack of musical aptitude and inclination, or physical defects disqualified the student, I was quite frank in saying so."<sup>237</sup>

Suzuki also blamed traditional teaching for holding an impossible expectation that children should be able to achieve success by persevering through drudgery. Suzuki found this an inappropriate expectation for young students, and he believed it was a reason many traditional students lost interest, failed to thrive, or quit their violin studies. This traditional attitude is evidenced by German pedagogue Franz Wohlfahrt, author of a widely used beginner/intermediate etude series. Wohlfahrt wrote, "The study of the violin presents certain

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<sup>236</sup> Hermann, *Man and His Philosophy*.

<sup>237</sup> Auer, *Violin Playing*, 7. L. Auer (1845–1930) was a violinist from Hungary who moved to St. Petersburg, Russia, and became one of the most famous violin pedagogues in Russia until his emigration to the United States in 1918.

difficulties for beginners which are frequently the cause of a sudden abatement in the pupil's zeal and ambition, even before he has mastered the first rudiments. The blame for this is commonly laid on the teacher, who is called incapable or negligent; losing sight of the fact that the pupil began his studies without the slightest notion, not merely of the difficulties to be encountered, but also of the regular and assiduous industry indispensable for surmounting them.”<sup>238</sup>

Suzuki did not blame students any failure to achieve: not from lack of work ethic, nor from a lack of inborn ability. Rather, he argued that all children could achieve high levels of playing and that the prevalence of musical failure could be blamed on mainstream methods.<sup>239</sup>

Suzuki argued that good teaching methods would produce ability, and bad teaching would prevent ability from developing—talent was all but irrelevant.<sup>240</sup> He blamed mainstream approaches for requiring more drudgery than young students could be expected to endure and to stay motivated through. He also argued that practicing exercises and etudes was beyond young children's developmental readiness, and good teaching would cater to children's natural and successful modes of learning. He deplored the traditional attitude that lack of talent could be responsible for musical failure, and he provided a logical framework for why traditional logic failed.

Suzuki found it paradoxical that children could be so frequently accused of having low cognitive or physical potential, when children universally demonstrated perfect success in learning their native languages by very young ages, including absorption of grammar norms, nuanced vocabulary, and aesthetic development of subtle geographical accents. As evidence of

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<sup>238</sup> Wohlfahrt, *Sixty Studies*, preface.

<sup>239</sup> Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 5–18.

<sup>240</sup> Suzuki, *Ability Development*, 3–24.

the difficulty and magnitude of the task of language development, he pointed to the low success of adults in developing a second language. He used the comparison between native language acquisition and second-language study difference to show a parallel between his approach and traditional teaching. He argued that learning a language from a book, from a class, and from practicing grammar rules presented a great deal of drudgery, a discouraging amount of struggle, and produced poorer results than learning language through immersion, little by little, and only through the natural process of attempting communication. He therefore rejected teaching violin through exercises and etudes, and he designed a method that allowed children to learn naturally and enjoyably through real music.

Suzuki's mission was to produce high ability in all students, and to correct the common belief that "Nothing can be done about a lack of inborn ability."<sup>241</sup> After several decades, he declared his method a success, saying, "I have spent some thirty years proving a method about which it can truly be said, "Look, advanced ability can be nurtured in any child. With this method wonderful ability can be developed, but with some other method, some children will become miserable human beings with little ability."<sup>242</sup>

As evidenced by the preceding quotes of Auer and Wohlfahrt, and by the commentary by Suzuki on traditional violin-pedagogical philosophy and methods, lack of student success is blamed on a lack of talent or work ethic, but not on curricula. Traditional violin pedagogical philosophy shows a circular logic, and the circle precludes blame on the educational materials: Talent is rare, therefore success is rare; learning the violin is difficult and, at first, unpleasant—therefore natural talent is needed; natural talent is rare, therefore success is rare. Traditional

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 1.

philosophy produced educational materials intended to guide the violinist through the array of technical obstacles the violinist will encounter. The materials are focused, direct, and designed for efficiency. The educational approach is not fun: because the violin is difficult, perseverance is necessary. A student without grit will quit. Likewise, a student without talent may never succeed. The talented student, however, will demonstrate ease with technical studies and will move through the volumes at an accelerated pace.

According to the traditional approach, teachers assign etudes and exercises from the canon of works by Ševčík, Kreutzer, Dont, Paganini, etc. as supplements or preparations for repertoire (this canon of etudes and exercises has been curated by 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century pedagogues including Leopold Auer, Ivan Galamian, Dorothy DeLay, Carl Flesch, and Simon Fischer). A traditional teacher has to have a deep knowledge of the canon of etudes so that he may assign adequate material to develop the range of left-hand, right-hand, and musicianship skills that a student's repertoire demands. Etudes and exercises take on many forms and serve different purposes. The Etudes by Kreutzer, Dont, Rode, and Gavinies take the form of caprices, works of one to four pages that focus on one or few techniques and present that technique in many variations and levels of difficulty. Other series by Dounis, Ševčík and Schradieck are as short as a few measures and have no musical form. Rather, those volumes comprise short, focused exercises that train shifting, double stops, agility, bow strokes, and present them using all possible finger combinations and in many or all possible keys. Other books feature scales and arpeggios in all keys and with various fingerings and bowing combinations, most notably Carl

Flesch's Scale System.<sup>243</sup> These etudes and exercises serve as an aural and physical reference for techniques that appear in literature.

Traditional pedagogy insists that technique must be taught before, and separately from musical development. Traditional pedagogues have posited that building technique requires the student's undivided attention, and that diverting a student's attention from technique before the technique was secure would result in flawed technique. Students practice a technique in bulk in an etude in order to make the technique easy to play when it appears in repertoire, and they practice technique in etudes so that when they play music, they can focus on interpretation and aesthetics rather than mechanics. Isolating not only technique from music, but also music from technique is intended to give students the physical and mental freedom to concentrate on artistry when playing repertoire. This provides the same focused time to develop interpretive skills that etudes provide to develop technique. Franz Wohlfahrt expounded on this theory in the preface to his *Sixty Studies*, where he describes the rigorous work on fundamental techniques that must be accomplished before a student can consider the work of artistry.<sup>244</sup>

Carl Flesch agreed with Wohlfahrt's approach, saying that a good elementary violin teacher should focus exclusively on technique; he wrote that the ideal course of violin study should be segregated and ordered: first to develop technique only, then to develop practice techniques, then to develop musical sensitivity and performance skills.<sup>245</sup>

Ivan Galamian demonstrated the same attitude. When he received an advanced student who required remediation, he was famous for assigning such a student to study only the A-Major

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<sup>243</sup> Carl Flesch, *Scale System: Scale Exercises in All Major and Minor Keys for Daily Study: Supplement to Book I of the Art of Violin Playing* (New York: C. Fischer, 1926).

<sup>244</sup> Wohlfahrt, *Sixty Studies*, preface.

<sup>245</sup> Flesch, *Art of Violin Playing*, 129–33.



scale for months, in order to build technique before repertoire could be approached. He would manipulate the A-Major scale to present the gamut of technical challenges a student would find in literature, and the student was intended to apply those techniques to repertoire once he was allowed to approach music.<sup>246</sup> Pinchas Zukerman quotes Galamian, who said of his students, “They often ask, ‘What about the *music*?’ My answer is, ‘You have to be *able* to produce it.’”<sup>247</sup>

Once a traditional student is learning the advanced repertoire, technical study is still an important part of a student’s work, and it is studied in a separate setting from repertoire. Carl Flesch outlines a common way etudes are used in his book, *The Art of Violin Playing*. He describes teaching a student the Wieniawski Violin Concerto. The student arrives at a passage he is technically underqualified for. He describes a process where he examines the passage and selects an etude by Dont that presents the same bow-technique challenge. He also assigns a shifting etude to address the left-hand challenges in the passage. The student is assigned to play the Dont etude and the shifting exercise exclusively for a week before attempting the Wieniawski passage again. Flesch intends for the student to synthesize the separate techniques and apply them to the Wieniawski.<sup>248</sup>

Dorothy DeLay, who studied with Galamian and was his teaching assistant at Juilliard, exemplifies the traditional division between technical and repertoire study in her personally devised practice schedule, which she assigned to all of her advanced students. This five-hour practice routine comprised: hour 1: Basics such as left hand articulation, shifting vibrato and

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<sup>246</sup> Green, *Miraculous Teacher*, 99.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>248</sup> Flesch, *Art of Violin Playing*, 129, 133, 143–44.

right hand bow strokes; hour 2: Repertoire passages; hour 3: Etudes and Paganini; hour 4: Concerto hour 5: Bach or solo recital repertoire.<sup>249</sup>

While these traditional pedagogues are known for teaching older, advanced students, this type of education was not reserved for mature players. Galamian was known to teach pre-school-aged children; Paul Mekanowitzky began studying with Galamian at age four. After five years with Galamian, he gave a recital including Vivaldi's *Concerto in A Minor, Largo* and *Allegro* by Veracini (both of which are featured in the intermediate levels of the Suzuki progression), a Viotti concerto and two Kreisler pieces.<sup>250</sup>

The separation of theory and practice, along with the pedantic nature of traditional etude series, were the curricular elements Suzuki rejected. The absence of the canonical etude series in the Suzuki approach is widely known, but little understood. It is often explained, "Traditional methods teach through etudes, and Suzuki does not." Renowned Suzuki teacher, Barbara Barber, writes "Suzuki has eliminated the use of etudes in his graded course and uses scales and arpeggios sparingly,"<sup>251</sup> Barber's statement is nuanced. In Suzuki's ten volumes, there are no Kreutzer or Dont etudes, and only a few scales and arpeggios are interspersed between the repertoire pieces. This differs strongly from traditional pedagogical texts. However, while Barber states the difference in proportion between dedicated technical text and repertoire, many Suzuki-outsiders believe something more extreme and incorrect: many Suzuki outsiders believe that Suzuki students learn technique incidentally through their repertoire, without studying technical exercises at all. This is far from true.

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<sup>249</sup> Barbara Lourie Sand, *Teaching Genius: Dorothy DeLay and the Making of a Musician* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2005), 53.

<sup>250</sup> Green, *Miraculous Teacher*, 13–15.

<sup>251</sup> Barbara Barber, "Traditional & Suzuki Teaching: A Comparison," *American Suzuki Journal* 22, no. 1 (1993):33–39, <https://suzukiassociation.org/news/traditional-suzuki-teaching-comparison/>.

The Suzuki approach involves an effort to keep theory and practice combined, so many technical exercises are set in the context of real music, rather than in dedicated pieces called “etudes.” But where “etude” means “technical study,” the Suzuki approach uses plenty of “etudes.” Suzuki etudes, however, come less from dedicated etude texts and more from repertoire and creatively designed, review-based exercises.

Teri Einfeldt explains how Suzuki does use “etudes,” and that music serves a dual purpose in Suzuki practice. Einfeldt writes, “If you learned an instrument as a child via the traditional method, more than likely you had many books you carried to your lesson that contained etudes. We [Suzuki teachers] use review pieces as etudes to reinforce technical and musical concepts much the same as the traditional methods use etudes.”<sup>252</sup> Barbara Barber explains another way Suzuki teaches technique through music: “New techniques are introduced in the pieces themselves or with short exercises provided in the books. Teachers are [also] expected to make up dozens of mini-drills in the easy volumes.”<sup>253</sup>

Einfeldt and Barber pointed to three ways Suzuki teachers use music and not traditional etudes to teach technique. First, Suzuki teachers manipulate review pieces to become etudes. Second, short exercises excerpted from the repertoire serve as preparatory exercises for the associated repertoire pieces. Preparatory exercises are snippets of the repertoire introduced in the pages that precede a piece in the Suzuki volumes. And third, as Barbara Barber stated, Suzuki teachers create mini-drills out of a student’s repertoire. These three methods reflect Suzuki’s desire to set technique instruction in a child-appropriate context, where they are “playing” more

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<sup>252</sup> Teri Einfeldt “Important Ideas to Remember in Your Role as a Suzuki Parent,” *American Suzuki Journal* 40, no. 2 (March 2012), <https://suzukiassociation.org/news/important-ideas-to-remember-in-your-role/>.

<sup>253</sup> Barber, “Comparison.”

than working and where learning is “hands-on.” (In the case of violin, where your hands are always “on” the violin, this means that technique work is as explicitly linked to performance as possible.)

Employing “review pieces” to teach and refine techniques is a creative and individualized process. Suzuki students maintain active mastery of all previously studied repertoire; these learned pieces are called their “review pieces,” and they are continuously polished and refined, as well as frequently performed. (See discussion of “spiral learning” in Progressive and Suzuki education on p. 94 in Chapter 2) Suzuki teachers manipulate a student’s review repertoire to create etude material, imposing new techniques on familiar notes and rhythms. These exercises are individually designed based on each student’s level and aptitude. When a Suzuki teacher manipulates a student’s review repertoire to create etude material, imposing new techniques on familiar notes and rhythms, the new technique is unavoidably highlighted, because the rest of the student’s experience is so familiar it is unremarkable.

Learning technique through review pieces demonstrates a second pedagogical objective. The new technique is not only easy to focus on, but the technique is set in a context where it must match a high standard of proficiency. Since the student has achieved and has a high standard for the tone, intonation and musical elements of each review piece, imposing a new technique on any review piece highlights for the student any disparity between their competency with the new technique and their general level of playing. Furthermore, learning techniques through familiar music allows students to work with pieces they already have learned to play expressively, automatically integrating artistry and execution. The integration of technique and artistry is the integration of theory and practice central to Suzuki’s approach, and keeping the two elements together is intended to promote each element synergistically.

Suzuki hoped students find ease, comfort, and enjoyment in learning techniques by playing music that they play well, rather than struggling through dry etudes. He argued in *Young Children's Talent and its Education* that it was fruitless to force children to work through dry, unpleasant tasks or through modes that didn't agree with children's maturity level. He intended review-based technique study to be playful and engaging, and rejected traditional modes that needed to be “forced” on students that traditional pedagogy promoted.<sup>254</sup>

There is a fallout in Suzuki's malleable method—the approach works only as well as the teacher can manipulate it. A well-trained Suzuki teacher will impose a technical exercise on a review piece, so that it serves the same purpose as a Schradieck exercise, but is more pleasant for the student to practice. However, there are many Suzuki teachers who are unfamiliar with the canon of etudes, and who have not observed a master Suzuki teacher assign excellent review-based exercises. Those teachers will fall short in their efforts to teach advanced technique, and they have no Suzuki-pedagogical resources to assist them in teaching better.

The following illustration exemplifies technical instruction through etudes or through review pieces: When a student is first assigned Bach's Minuet in G Major, he has never played a slur before. In traditional teaching, a student might be assigned an etude full of slurs. But with this slurring etude, the sound of a slur is not scaffolded on any particular sound in the student's aural memory; he may hear the slur well, but the sound has no relationship to anything in his existing knowledge.

Suzuki depends on a scaffolding approach, and on the integration of theory and practice. To teach the student to slur, a Suzuki teacher could select a polished review piece and impose a slur

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<sup>254</sup> Suzuki, *Young Children's Talent Education*, 49–50.

on two familiar, previously unslurred notes. For example, the student could practice his first slurs by slurring the eighth notes in “O Come Little Children.” Because the student knew the eighth-notes as detached, he would automatically feel and hear the difference between slurred and detached notes by comparing the two experiences. Furthermore, the child’s burden is eased and focus is heightened, compared to the etude setting. Whereas in the etude, the notes and rhythms are new, and the sounds of the etude are generally unfamiliar, the Suzuki student’s only task at hand is to slur two already familiar notes. The only new sound he hears is a slur, because the tone, intonation, and rhythm of the review piece have been well established in a previous learning experience.

The second setting Suzuki technical instruction uses to teach technique is called a preparatory exercise. Preparatory exercises are technical exercises based on excerpts from a Suzuki repertoire piece. These exercises typically range from two to six measures, and they are official, printed technical exercises in the Suzuki Violin School volumes, appearing the page before the repertoire piece they serve. While preparatory exercises do not employ the spiral learning model that review-based technical instruction does, preparatory exercises maintain the integration of theory and practice central to the Suzuki approach. Preparatory exercises feature the elements of a repertoire piece that require new technical skills, printed in slower rhythms, in more beginner versions, or in step-by-step instructions for practicing the technique. These exercises can be studied before beginning to study the related piece, so fluency with the piece can be achieved without technical roadblocks. Preparatory exercises distill the task at hand and motivate students by connecting their technical work directly to an upcoming repertoire achievement. Suzuki intended preparatory exercises to keep students feeling successful and motivated, by introducing new techniques in small, manageable steps. The brevity and music-

centeredness of preparatory exercises contrasts with traditional etudes, where a given technique is featured in countless incarnations over the course of a page or more to provide bulk, focused practice.

The third format Suzuki technical instruction takes, as mentioned by Teri Einfeldt, is frequently called a mini-drill. Mini-drills may appear on the surface identical to an exercise from Schradieck, Service, or Dounis, whose books contain thousands of mini-drills. However, under the Suzuki approach, teachers can choose notes and rhythms from a student's repertoire to serve as the basis for the drills, which is intended to hold more meaning for the student and to be more enjoyable than exercises from an etude book. Additionally, students benefit from a secure base in familiar notes.

While Suzuki centered his technique-instructional methods around real music, he did not forsake all traditional teaching tools. Scales do appear interspersed throughout Suzuki's ten volumes, and those scales precede pieces which feature those scales. Traditional teachers also prepare students aurally and physically with scales by training scales in the key of a student's repertoire piece.

Suzuki also published two etude books that are still commonly used, *Quint Etudes* and *Position Etudes*.<sup>255</sup> While at first it seems contradictory that Suzuki would be opposed to etudes and also publish etudes, Suzuki's belief in keeping technical study based in music shines through in his etude books.

Suzuki's best-known etude book is called *Quint Etudes*. These are etudes all based on the interval of a fifth that provide opportunities to improve tone in double stops, to practice proper

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<sup>255</sup> Shin'ichi Suzuki, *Quint Etudes* (Princeton: Birch Tree Group, 1959); Shin'ichi Suzuki, *Position Études* (Tokyo: Zen-On Music Publishers, 1955).

elbow position and finger placement on the various strings, and shifting. While these etudes appear quite dry and technical on the surface, they are actually based in an aural context that has great meaning and security in student's minds: The fifths that serve as the basis of these etudes parallel the intervals that make up the violin's tuning, and students have an aural and physical reference for these etudes from the practice of tuning their own violins. His second book, *Position Etudes*, teaches shifting in a similar way to traditional shifting etudes, but it is rooted in the philosophy that technique should be connected to musical practice, so each shift is connected to "Perpetual Motion," a scale-based beginner Suzuki piece; the end of the book transforms the scales taught in the ten volumes of Suzuki repertoire into position studies. These use the same special "two-finger" pattern as Carl Flesch's "two-finger scales," but for Suzuki there had to be a musical or real-life aural reference for technical exercises.

The Suzuki approach is not unique because of it lacks etudes. In fact, many Suzuki teachers feel the Suzuki approach does not preclude the incorporation of traditional etudes into later stages of study. Barber writes, "[Suzuki teachers] supplement the later volumes with standard scales, technical studies and etudes."<sup>256</sup> Rather, the uniqueness of the Suzuki approach comes from its employment and manipulation of repertoire as etude material, allowing teachers to choose not to use any etudes at all, even for the instruction of advanced techniques. Suzuki's approach sets itself apart from traditional teaching in the same respects as described in Chapter 2, where Suzuki's approach set itself apart from traditional general education. Suzuki's approach prizes the integration of theory and practice, attention student motivation and engagement, and attention to student's maturity level and natural modes of learning at young ages.

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<sup>256</sup> Barber, "A Comparison."



Arguably, Suzuki's most important etude series is the violin repertoire in the Suzuki Violin School volumes. Because Suzuki aimed to teach as much technique as possible through repertoire, he attempted to create a systematic ordering of the repertoire where techniques advance as gradually and as linearly as possible. Especially in the earliest volumes, Suzuki succeeded in introducing a minimal amount of new technique in each piece, and in selecting a logical technique to scaffold on each previously learned skill. (This is not a complete explanation of the design of the Suzuki repertoire, nor is such a discussion pertinent to this work). This is not to say that Suzuki teachers universally adhere to the ordering of the pieces in the Suzuki book, nor is it to say that Suzuki teachers never interpolate extra repertoire into a student's curriculum (especially in the later stages of Suzuki training where the repertoire comes from standard, professional recital and concert works). Many teachers do see large leaps in difficulty and notice neglected techniques and styles, especially in the later Suzuki books. In fact, in recent decades, the International Suzuki Association has recognized a need to include a broader spectrum of repertoire in Suzuki students' education, due to the lack of Romantic and 20<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire in the Suzuki series. The ISA thus requested that violin committee of the Suzuki Association of the Americas publish a list of suggested supplementary repertoire.<sup>257</sup> The violin committee included many pieces that Suzuki used in lessons and concerts, which shows that Suzuki did not intend his method books to be the exclusive educational materials used. However, a discussion of the technique-instructional materials of the Suzuki approach would be sorely lacking without mentioning the graded repertoire itself, in addition to the preparatory exercises, mini-drills, and review-based technique instruction that accompanies them.

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<sup>257</sup> "Suggested Supplementary Repertoire for Revised Violin Books 6, 7 & 8," Suzuki Association of the Americas, accessed 22 April 2014, <https://suzukiassociation.org/news/suggested-supplementary-repertoire-for-revised/>.

***PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE DIFFERENT PRACTICES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL ETUDE STUDY AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE SUZUKI APPROACH***

The philosophies of the traditional and Suzuki schools of violin instruction have resulted in vastly different paths to technical proficiency. Within each approach, individual differences between teachers bring about different paths to technical competency, and different technique texts suggest different approaches to different techniques. The following illustrations demonstrate sample paths to technical proficiency in various techniques, using the Suzuki or traditional approach. These illustrations are not intended to show the only way, or even the most common way a technique can be taught—teachers have individual preferences and methods. Furthermore, the Suzuki examples cannot be considered “official Suzuki teaching procedures.” The Suzuki Association of the Americas offers teacher-training courses, taught by certified teacher-trainers, in which teachers can learn directly from exemplary Suzuki teachers who know Suzuki’s personal pedagogy intimately and who have been expressly trained in how to carry out the legacy of Suzuki instruction. These examples do not reflect the opinion of any Suzuki teacher trainer, and should not be interpreted as instructional texts on how to teach the Suzuki Method.<sup>258</sup> These sample paths to technical proficiency illustrate how methods used by Suzuki and traditional approach the same techniques in different ways, by teaching the technique through music or by teaching the technique from etudes.

These illustrations show two features of the different approaches. First, they show how a Suzuki or traditional teacher would build a given advanced technique when a certain repertoire piece requires it. Traditional teachers would assign etudes, and Suzuki teachers would use review

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<sup>258</sup> Information on acquiring teacher training through the Suzuki Association of the Americas can be found at <https://suzukiassociation.org/teachers/training/>.

repertoire, preparatory exercises, or mini-drills to provide appropriate technical material to develop that technique. Second, these illustrations show how both the Suzuki repertoire and various etude series present the gradual advancement of certain techniques in their curricula. By tracing how techniques advance in both scenarios, this type of illustration shows equivalence in the logical design between Suzuki's presentation of technical advancement through music and traditional technical advancement through etudes, while demonstrating the difference in pedagogical choices that grew out of each approach's philosophy.

### ***TECHNIQUE #1: UP-BOW STACCATO***

Students learning up-bow staccato via the Suzuki approach or the traditional approach may take parallel steps to achieve fluency with the bow stroke; however Suzuki teachers normally teach the technique using repertoire and traditional teachers use etudes. No matter which tradition a teacher comes from, there are many strategies to choose from in teaching the up-bow staccato. Demetrius Constantine Dounis focuses on the initial articulation of the staccato as the central skill; Leopold Mozart focuses on the ability to lift the bow quickly as the fundamental skill necessary for the stroke; Philippe Quint focuses on the application of pressure to the stick of the bow as the essence of up-bow staccato technique.<sup>259</sup> This illustration presents the collé stroke as the fundamental basis of the up-bow staccato, and it presents sample paths to a fluent up-bow staccato learning the stroke using manipulated review repertoire under the Suzuki approach and through etudes under the traditional approach.

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<sup>259</sup> David D. Boyden, "The Violin and Its Technique in the 18th Century," *Musical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (January 1950): 9–38; Philippe Quint, "The Perfect Up–Bow Staccato," *The Violin Channel: Ask the Pros*, 17 July 2013, <http://www.theviolinchannel.com/ask-the-pros-philippe-quint/>; Demetrius Constantine Dounis, *The Dounis Collection* (n.p.: Carl Fischer, 2005), 249–51.

The up-bow staccato stroke comprises many hooked notes, performed rapidly, typically starting in the upper part of the bow. The rapidity of the stroke, combined with the great resistance provided by the tip of the bow, challenge the violinist to balance pressure and release of the bow with exactitude.

The individual notes in an up-bow staccato passage are performed much like collé strokes. The collé stroke begins with the bow sitting on the string. The violinist applies pressure to the stick of the bow using the right-hand index finger. Then, to create a sharp articulation and a ringing tone, the violinist instantaneously releases the bow pressure, simultaneously lifting the bow off the string and moving the bow horizontally. A single up-bow staccato note can be considered a miniature collé. Rather than allowing the bow to fly freely off the string, the up-bow staccato stroke releases the bow pressure only enough for the pitch to sound, never allowing the bow hair to lose contact with the string. As soon as the pitch sounds, the bow hand must instantly reapply pressure on the string for the next note. On top of mastering the basic collé stroke, the violinist must control how far the bow releases vertically, and how much the bow moves horizontally; both of these motions must be minute and require great control. Because up-bow staccato is featured in passages containing many hooked notes at great speed, the violinist must not release the bow too far, because the arm will not have time to return to the string to apply pressure for the next note, and the violinist must move the bow only a very small distance horizontally so he doesn't run out of bow before the end of the slur marking.

**Example 1: Carl Maria Von Weber, Country Dance, mm. 1–14**



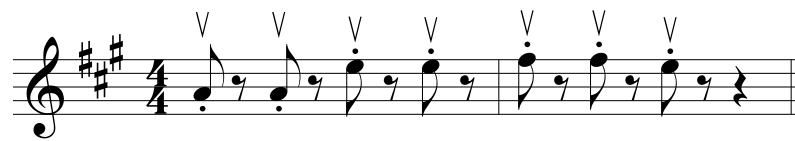
Training the up-bow staccato through music under the Suzuki approach begins with a review of the basic collé stroke. The Suzuki teacher would likely not use *Country Dance* to teach this basic articulation, but would more likely use a beginner review piece; using an easy piece eliminates challenges with notes and rhythms, allowing the student to focus only on the bow stroke.

A Suzuki teacher could transform *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* from a legato, quarter-note piece into a crisp, eighth-note/eighth-rest collé piece, using only up-bows. The rests in between the notes allow the student to recover the muscles in between notes and re-focus before attempting the next note. This exercise provides the student an opportunity to feel the great resistance of the bow on the string at the tip, developing the strength and explosiveness needed for the finished product. Practicing this piece in a slow tempo lets the student execute the articulation in the easiest way possible, using large muscles and without having to continue the stroke.

Meanwhile, the student hears the new sound in a familiar musical context. Because the tune is familiar and the articulation is new, the articulation is impossible to ignore or misunderstand.

The theme itself is second nature, and is therefore unremarkable. It is only the new bow stroke that is notable. Additionally, the Suzuki teacher intends that the student should have an existing standard for how “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” should sound, rhythmically, tone-wise, intonation wise, and phrasing-wise, and so the student’s standard for the articulation should conform to the other mastered elements of this piece.

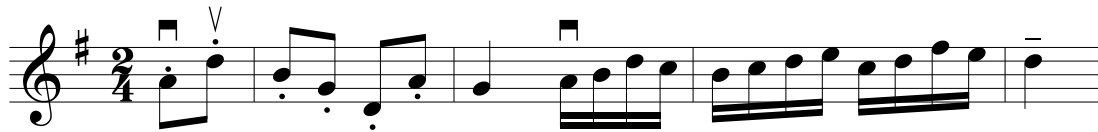
**Example 2: “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” with Up-Bow Collé**



The next step in developing the up-bow staccato is to connect more than one up-bow stroke together. Another review piece from Suzuki Book 2, “Gavotte” from *Mignon*, can be transformed to feature a beginner, connected up-bow staccato. The teacher can impose an up-bow staccato on the first two measures of “Gavotte” from *Mignon* without altering the tempo or sound of the piece, because the tempo of “Gavotte” from *Mignon* is quite slow for an up-bow staccato passage, and there are only six staccatos to be joined together. “Gavotte” from *Mignon* contains another feature that keeps the staccato simple: there is a rest at the end of the series, which isolates the staccato event, allowing the ear to reflect and the arm to recover from the exercise. Finally, because “Gavotte” from *Mignon* is naturally a staccato piece, it is possible to use the original, alternating staccatos as the aural reference for how the up-bow staccatos should sound. The use of this piece demonstrates a reason Suzuki felt teaching technique through music was effective: Because the review piece is familiar and already performed at a high level, the student strives to achieve the same perfection of the new technique as the original technique. The

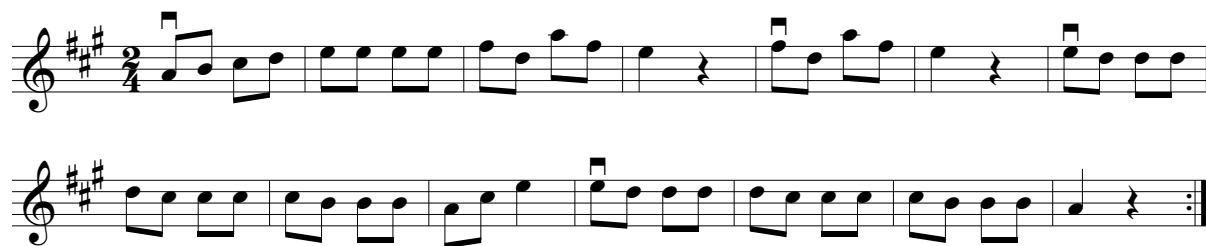
student can automatically play the technique expressively, since he has an expressive association with the opening measures of “Gavotte” from *Mignon*.

**Example 3: Thomas arr. Suzuki, “Gavotte” from *Mignon*, mm. 1–4**



Another review piece, *Song of the Wind* from Book 1, advances the number of staccatos the student is able to hook together, again keeping a familiar context. Like “Gavotte” from *Mignon*, *Song of the Wind*’s tempo is slow for an up-bow staccato passage, and is originally played with staccato articulation, and includes an opportunity for the arm to rest and the ear to reflect at the end of the hooked bows. But *Song of the Wind* is more challenging than “Gavotte” from *Mignon*, because *Song of the Wind* presents twelve successive, alternating staccatos in a row before the final release. The student must keep the vertical releases of the bow smaller and the horizontal motions shorter in order to have enough bow to complete all twelve staccatos under one bow.

**Example 4: Suzuki, *Song of the Wind*, mm. 1–4**



After learning to play up-bow staccato through three review pieces, the student is fully prepared to apply the learned technique to the melody in *Country Dance*.

Whereas the Suzuki approach allows the student to progress through several review pieces to develop the up-bow staccato, the traditional approach would use etudes as parallel resources for developing the up-bow staccato stroke.

Just as with the Suzuki approach, the traditional teacher can begin to develop the up-bow staccato stroke by reviewing the collé stroke. In Dounis' etude book Op. 21, *Studies on a Scientific Basis for the Highest Development in Staccato playing*, he addresses the articulation of the individual up-bow staccato stroke in detail. Dounis describes the up-bow staccato as a stroke that requires strength and quickness, but he first suggests training mastery of individual collé stroke, which he considers the basis for the up-bow staccato. In a parallel exercise with the Suzuki transformation of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* in up-bow collé, Dounis suggests that students practice Kreutzer's *Etude no. 2* with explosive up-bow strokes, placing rests in between each note.<sup>260</sup>

**Example 5, Kreutzer, Etude no. 2, mm. 1–2**



Once the individual stroke is developed, a traditional teacher may draw from a popular etude at the beginning of Galamian's and Flesch's etude sequences, Kreutzer's Etude no. 4. Like the Suzuki review pieces, many of the staccato series end with a long note or a rest, allowing the arm to recover and the ear to reflect. To keep the tempo manageable for a beginner playing up-bow staccato, Kreutzer prefaces the etude by instructing students to first practice the stroke very

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<sup>260</sup> Dounis, *The Dounis Collection*, 249–51.



slowly. Kreutzer's etude differs from the Suzuki review pieces in a couple of ways. First, it is over a page long, where the Suzuki excerpts were only a measure or two long. This presents a greater challenge to the student, to learn many new notes and rhythms while learning a new technique. Also, whereas in the Suzuki review-pieces, the number of hooked staccatos were very few, the Kreutzer etude is long and features hooked passages in varying lengths.

**Example 6: Kreutzer, Etude no. 4, mm 1–15**



A Suzuki student might spend a very short time with each review piece before moving to the next, but the traditional student might spend a great deal of time with Kreutzer's etude. Where the Suzuki approach might present many different review pieces to advance incrementally, the Kreutzer etude can serve all levels of advancement by following Kreutzer's suggestion of beginning slowly and advancing the speed gradually. Once the Kreutzer etude would be comfortable for a traditional student, *Country Dance* would present no challenge at all and could be a purely musical exercise.

This illustration of the Suzuki and traditional approaches to teaching a virtuosic bow stroke shows the spiral learning process of the Suzuki approach as it contrasts with the linear traditional approach. It shows Suzuki's avoidance of abstractions and of his insistence that theory and practice are combined. It also shows that the Suzuki approach attempts to cater to children's motivation by allowing technical exercises to be as much "play" and as little "work" as possible, while the traditional approach would require the student to take on the more mature task of metronome work, to take on more work by learning entire new etudes in the first place, and to make the connection between the sound of the stroke as learned in the etude and the sound of the stroke in the different style context of *Country Dance*.

### ***TECHNIQUE #2: TRILLS***

Certain techniques in the Suzuki repertoire are introduced quite systematically, in a way that allows teachers to introduce techniques through repertoire pieces, rather than introducing them through etudes as is done by many traditional teachers. Trill development is one of those techniques that is introduced through the Suzuki repertoire in a linear, small-steps fashion.<sup>261</sup>

The Suzuki repertoire presents the following elements of trilling in order: 1) Velocity: the first thing developed is the quickness of the alternating fingers. Suzuki uses grace notes and mordents to develop this motion 2) The duration of the trill: shorter trills are easier than longer trills. Therefore Suzuki begins with grace notes, then mordents, then trills lasting an eighth note, then trills that last a beat or more. 3) Trills with static endings are taught before trills that continue into nachschlags or that connect trills to other trills.

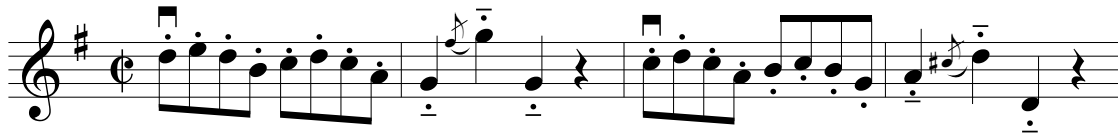
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<sup>261</sup> Some readers may be confused as to how the Suzuki Method introduces technique in a linear fashion through the literature, while the Suzuki Method is a spiral-model teaching process. The Suzuki repertoire is linear, but the learning model is spiral, because you continuously review the repertoire. This is unlike linear learning in which you advance forward and don't revisit lower levels.

The first preparation for trilling happens in Book 1, with grace notes in Gossec's "Gavotte."

The grace note is the trilling motion in its simplest form: velocity without continuation.

**Example 7: Gossec, Gavotte, mm. 1–4**



Six pieces later in the Suzuki progression, the mordent is introduced in Brahms's "Waltz."

Where the Gossec required the violinist to place the finger quickly, the Brahms requires the student to do a full trilling motion, dropping and lifting the finger. Note that the mordent, while still not a full trill, is "prepared" with the appearance of a long note holding the lower-trilling note before the mordent happens.

**Example 8: Brahms arr. Suzuki, Waltz, mm. 1–4**



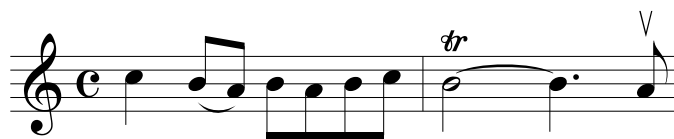
The next step the Suzuki progression features short, fast, prepared, stopping trills, in "Gavotte" from *Mignon*, by Ambroise Thomas. Building on the velocity developed in *Waltz*, "Gavotte" from *Mignon* introduces the full trilling motion. Notice that the trill is prepared with the G before the trill begins, and that the trill ends with rhythmic stasis on the F-sharp after the two turns.

**Example 9: Thomas, “Gavotte” from *Mignon*, mm. 4–6**



After Thomas’s “Gavotte” from *Mignon*, the Suzuki progression advances trills to a longer duration on Lully’s “Gavotte.” The half note trill would likely feature slower oscillations than in “Gavotte” from *Mignon*; the Suzuki progression does not indicate that velocity is an advanced element in the development of trilling. Note that still in Lully’s Gavotte, the trill is prepared by the previous note and ends with rhythmic stasis lower note; the only advancing element is duration.

**Example 10: Lully, Gavotte, mm. 20–21**



The connection between the trill in “Gavotte” from *Mignon* and Lully’s Gavotte is explicit: between the two pieces, which are consecutive pieces in the Suzuki progression, Suzuki inserted a preparatory exercise that shows that the trills use the same fingers, the same interval, and the same velocity, but that the Lully advances the trill to be two oscillations longer:

**Example 11: *Suzuki Violin School vol. 2*, Preparatory Exercise no. 15: “Trill Exercise”**



After the full trill is developed in Lully’s Gavotte the Suzuki progression presents the nachschlag motion on a short trill.

### Example 12: Boccherini, Minuet, mm. 19–20



Finally, moving, sequenced trills with nachschlags appear in the eighth volume of Suzuki's series, in Veracini's Violin sonata.

**Example 13: Veracini, Violin Sonata mvmt. 2, mm. 54–56.**



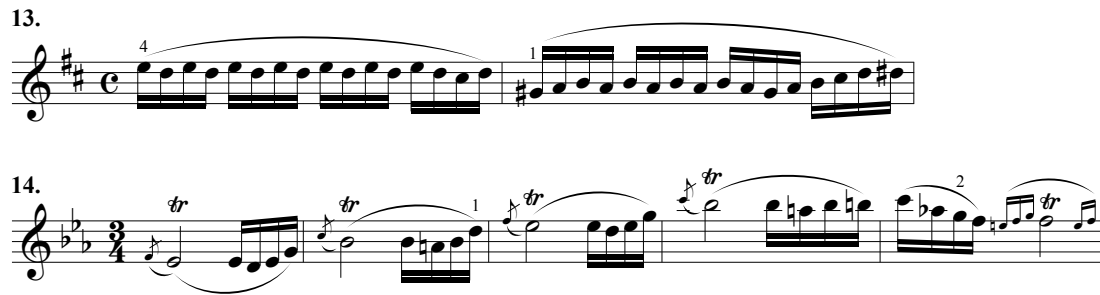
The various etude books propose different orderings for the development of the requisite skills. Unlike in the Suzuki approach, most of the etude literature presents velocity as the last step, ostensibly the most challenging element of trilling. Duration, however, is viewed as a preliminary step. Etude literature features many whole-note slow trills that advance toward faster alternation of the fingers, where the Suzuki repertoire began with brief, fast-alternating trills, and only later do trills last more time. Ševčík's *Op. 7 Part 1, Preparatory Trill Exercises*, demonstrates the notion that long, slow trills are to be developed before rapid trills.

### Example 14: Ševčík, Preparatory Trill Exercises



Jacques Mazas, a French violinist, composer, and pedagogue, wrote etudes that reflect the same perspective on trilling as Ševčík in his trill studies. In Mazas Opus 36 etudes. Etude no. 13 prepares students for trilling with oscillating slow sixteenth notes, and then in Etude no. 14, the student advances to a more rapid, unmeasured trill:

**Example 15: Mazas, Op. 36, no. 13 mm. 1–2; no. 14 mm. 1–5**



Kreutzer's etudes present trills in a more haphazard ordering, though in general they present a different approach from Ševčík and Mazas. The first trilling etudes in Kreutzer's series, no. 15 and 16, present brief, eighth-note trills with nachschlag:

**Example 16: Kreutzer, Etude no. 15, mm. 1–3**



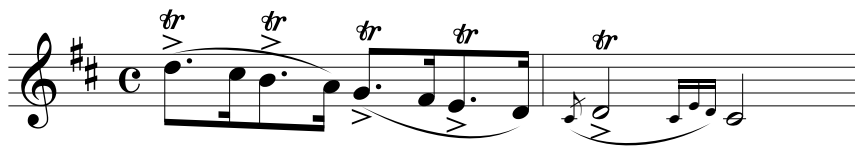
While the nachschlag requires more coordination than ending a trill with rhythmic stasis, etude no. 17 presents a trilling exercise identical to “Gavotte” from Mignon in Suzuki Book 2:

**Example 17: Kreutzer, Etude no. 17, m. 1**



Then etude no. 18 presents trills in the full, continuous motion setting of the Veracini sonata;

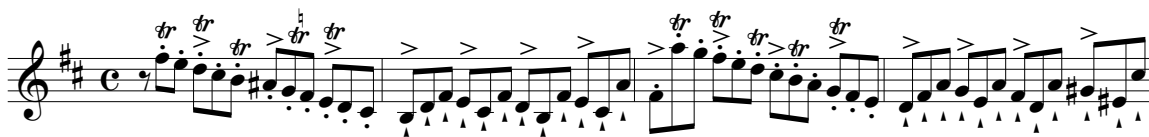
**Example 18: Kreutzer, Etude no. 18, mm. 1–2**



Finally, Kreutzer's etude no. 20 presents short-duration trills that require fast-alternating fingers.

These trills will be performed either as mordents or as two-turn trills, as in Lully's "Gavotte" and Kreutzer's *Etude no. 17*.

**Example 19: Kreutzer, Etude no. 20, mm. 1–4**



Kreutzer's etudes seem not to take a path of linear advancement, and Ševčík and Mazas' etudes don't provide a great deal of variety in the types of trill. However, practicing a variety of trilling etudes provides traditional students with a comprehensive, if not systematic, trilling education.

The Suzuki repertoire has relatively few trills in the ten volumes, compared to etude series, so Suzuki teachers normally supplement the gradual advancement of trills in the repertoire with

appropriately designed repertoire-derived etudes, much like those in the traditional etude literature.

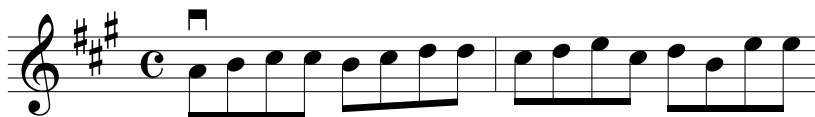
Suzuki teachers would train accelerating, Ševčík-like trills using review repertoire. To train long slurs in the Ševčík and Mazas etudes, Suzuki teachers may assign “Chorus” *from Judas Maccabeus* in oscillating sixteenth notes, or in fast, unmeasured trills.

**Example 20: Handel arr. Suzuki, “Chorus” from *Judas Maccabeus*, mm. 1–4**



To provide more training in velocity and control, Suzuki teachers may assign students to play “Perpetual Motion” by Suzuki in an identical form to Kreutzer’s Etude no. 20. In the example below, students would perform the piece 1) with a mordent on every other note; 2) with a two-turn trill on every other note; 3) with a mordent on every note; and 4) with a two-turn trill on every note. Of course, the possibilities for manipulating this review piece to create trilling etudes are endless.

**Example 21: Suzuki, “Perpetual Motion”, mm. 1–2**



Traditional and Suzuki students both receive comprehensive trill training through a variety of different trilling scenarios. The Kreutzer etudes parallel the trills as they appear in the Suzuki repertoire often, and sometimes Suzuki review pieces are manipulated to mimic the techniques



taught in the Kreutzer, Mazas, and Ševčík etudes. The ends of each approach should be the same. However, the Suzuki approach chooses to teach trills through real music, which aims to unburden the student of learning new notes when making technical efforts, and to make the experience enjoyable by keeping music-making a part of the experience. Also in the Suzuki approach, review pieces much shorter than the etudes found in the Kreutzer series, which serves to keep the student from becoming overwhelmed.

### ***TECHNIQUE #3: DOUBLE STOPS***

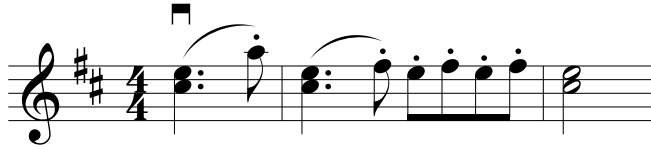
Tracing the progression of double stops through the Suzuki shows that Suzuki introduced techniques systematically through the music; double stops truly advance in logical increments through the Suzuki repertoire. A traditional teacher would likely teach every one of the pieces that feature double stops in the Suzuki repertoire, too; these pieces are some of the best-known pieces assigned to intermediate and advancing students. However, the scarcity of double stops in student-level literature requires teachers to supplement, with etudes or with music-based technical material.

There are three challenges for violinists to playing double stops. First is balancing the bow evenly on two strings. Second is an aural skill: the violinist must comprehend each of the two pitches being played and must also develop the ability to synthesize two pitches into the composite “double stop.” The third challenge is motor control, which includes the coordination necessary to move two selected fingers at once, as well as the restraint required to touch the violin lightly enough so as to not lose velocity or the ability to shift.

The first double stop in the Suzuki repertoire appears in Book 3 in Bach’s *Gavotte in D Major*. Here, issues of motor control are eliminated, because only one finger is placed on the string. Aural-perception challenges of the double stop are also eliminated by pairing an open

string with the c-sharp; the student needs only tune one note with the finger, just as in a single-stopped note.

**Example 22: Bach, Gavotte in D Major, mm. 17–19**

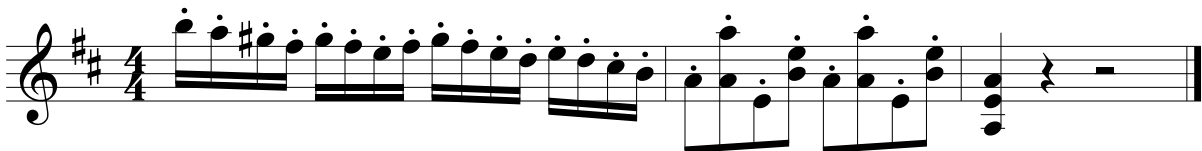


Not only is this double stop the simplest type, this particular double stop has been prepared in the Suzuki literature. In Suzuki Book 1, at the beginning of “Lightly Row,” the student has to place the c-sharp on the string while playing the first note, E, and has to make sure to not touch the E string in order to not compromise the E from sounding. This is the same finger skill used in double stopping a c-sharp with an open E.

After the first double stop in Book 3, Seitz Op. 22 mvmt. 1 in Suzuki Book 4 presents double stops in staccato at the frog.

As with Bach’s “Gavotte” in D Major, each double stop in this example from Seitz is blocked by only one finger and one open string, making the easiest scenario for both hands. The only challenge greater than in the Bach is that the violinist must execute consecutive double stops.

**Example 23: Seitz, Violin Concerto no. 5, Op. 22 mvmt. 1, mm. 93–95.**



Later in Book 4, the third movement of Seitz Op. 22 features the first true double stops, blocked by two fingers. As in the first movement of the Seitz concerto, these double stops require a

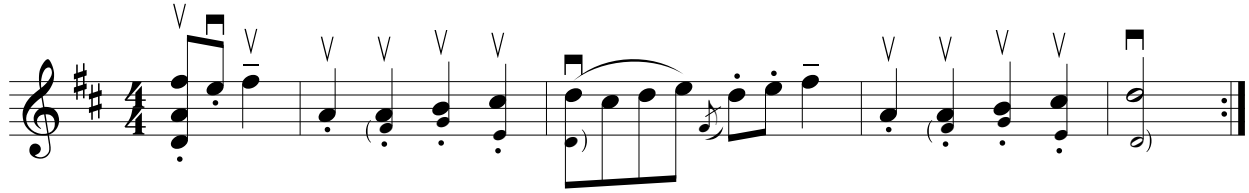
simultaneous attack on two strings. Also like the previous Seitz concerto, they are played at the frog, which is the easiest place to secure the bow on two strings. The only new challenge is the coordination of double stopping with two fingers, and this is made easy by the fact that most of the double-stopped fingers allow one or both fingers to rest on that pitch for several notes, reducing the coordination necessary to execute the passage.

**Example 24: Seitz, Violin Concerto no. 5, Op. 22, mvmt. 3, mm. 117–136**



Still later in the Suzuki progression, Bach’s “Gavotte” in Book 5 presents more difficult double stops. In this case, the double stops articulate the same way as the previous examples, and they use two fingers to stop the notes, but the fingers don’t have the opportunity to rest for long periods on a given finger. To make this introduction easier, the double-stopped notes are printed in parentheses, so the student can learn the melody notes only and later add the harmony notes underneath.

**Example 25: Bach, Gavotte, mm. 29–33**



Finally, at the beginning of Book 6, the student plays Corelli's *La Folia Variations*, which demands a fully developed double stopping skill. *La Folia* adds the challenge of sustaining the bow on two strings, rather than articulating short notes at the frog. The violinist must perform melody and countermelody in different rhythms under a slur, which the violinist must develop the aural skill to perceive, but the finger coordination was developed for this in the third movement of the Seitz, where one finger moved and the other rested (see measure 126 of Seitz Concerto 5 mvmt. 3).

To first prepare the bow for this challenge, Suzuki's *Quint Etudes* help the student gain comfort with sustaining double stops.<sup>262</sup> While Suzuki's *Quint Etudes* appear simple at best, and dry at worst, they do not lack connection to familiar, mastered skills from a Suzuki student's background. The *Quint Etudes*, named as such because they are all based on the interval of a fifth, provide opportunities to improve tone in double stops, to practice proper elbow position and finger placement on the various strings, and shifting. Traditional teaching often encourages open-string practice as in the etude below, for simplicity's sake. However, the *Quint Etudes* are in fifths not only for simplicity, but because the student's aural reference for the interval of a fifth is one of the most familiar and secure: tuning. In the preface to the *Quint Etudes*, Suzuki explains the basis of these exercises:

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<sup>262</sup> Suzuki, *Quint Etudes*.

It should be pointed out that, when tuning, most pupils will produce a very clear tone and control the volume with a delicate balance of the right hand. When they play double stops other than those on the open strings, however, this is not true...I believe it is because they have the definite goal of correcting the pitch when they begin to tune. Pupils should play all double stops in the same way they tune the strings.

This first etude in the book shows students that they have a comfortable basis for sustaining double stops; students rarely make this connection independently.

### Example 26: Suzuki, *Quint Etudes*, “Tuning Method”



After this exercise appears, Suzuki connects tuning with the double-stop section discussed previously in this essays' discussion of double stops. He reprints that section of *La Folia* immediately after this preparatory exercise (full exercise not shown here):

**Example 27: Corelli arr. Suzuki, *La Folia***

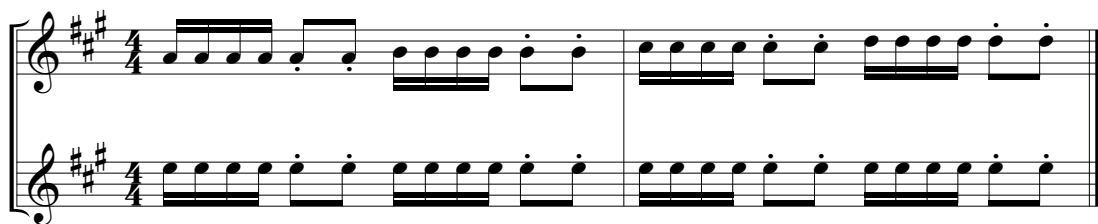


While the Suzuki literature itself presents double stops gradually, there are large gaps in time between when a student encounters each advancing step in double stopping. A Suzuki teacher would likely create extensive review-based exercises to provide practice material for the advancing student.

To develop double stopping at its easiest, as shown in the Bach “Gavotte” from Book 3, a Suzuki teacher can eliminate the aural and coordination challenges of double stopping. This way the student can focus on bow simultaneity, and the student can attempt simultaneous articulation

at in its easiest form first. One of Suzuki’s observations about violin technique was that it is easier to make a good tone with compact bow strokes and with *détaché* or staccato articulations. This is why the Suzuki student learns “Twinkle” with rhythmic variations before playing the theme. The same principle applies to double stops. A Suzuki teacher could use “The Monkey Song,” a preparatory song to “Twinkle,” which is not in the ten volumes of the Suzuki books but is a universally taught Suzuki piece, to teach double stopping. “The Monkey Song” features a scalar pattern on the A string. When students learn this song, a duet partner may play along with the “E-string harmony,” where the open E is played in the rhythm of the Monkey Song melody. As a first double stopping exercise, a Suzuki violinist can play “The Monkey Song” melody and E-string harmony simultaneously. Not only does this present double stops in their easiest left-hand form, where the second note is always an open string, but it presents the double stops in short notes. Additionally, the student has no aural challenge in perceiving the double-stop sound, as they are accustomed to hearing this piece as a duet.

**Example 28: Unknown, “The Monkey Song,” with E-String Harmony below**



While “The Monkey Song” presents a simplified version of double stops, it may present a hidden technical issue, and a need for remediation. If the fingers on the A string touch the E string, then the left hand is unprepared for double stops. The concept of “clearing the unplayed string,” where fingers are placed on the inside corners of the fingertips and the finger is round, so as to

not touch the unbowed strings, is taught at the pre-“Twinkle” level, but is a highlighted technique in “Lightly Row”. In “Lightly Row,” the student begins the with the second finger prepared on the A string while the first note, open E, is played. Should a student fail to clear the string in order to play “The Monkey Song” in successful double stops, “Lightly Row” can serve as a second double stopping etude that addresses this issue. “Lightly Row” is a better choice to remediate this issue than “The Monkey Song,” because the song begins with a prepared finger down, which allows the student to take his time in placing the finger and making sure the E string is cleared, before the double stop has to be played. Like “The Monkey Song,” Suzuki students are familiar with “Lightly Row” including an open E-String duet part.

The Suzuki teacher can also eliminate the struggle of sustaining the bow on two strings in “Lightly Row,” despite of the song’s slow rhythm. Suzuki teachers will often supplant a piece’s rhythm with the “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” *Variation A* rhythm (four sixteenth-notes, followed by two eighths). The student can advance with “Lightly Row” playing through the Twinkle Variation rhythms, until finally they play “Lightly Row” with six or seven inches of bow in the song’s true rhythm.

### Example 29: “Lightly Row Etude”



Later, to develop the left-hand coordination needed for the double stops in Seitz’s concerto, Bach’s Gavotte from Suzuki Book 5, and *La Folia*, the beginner Suzuki literature is accompanied violin harmony parts in lessons and group classes. A student in Book 2 may learn the harmonies for the Book 1 pieces. The harmony for *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* can be

played along with the melody. The Suzuki violinist has played and heard the two melodies separately thousands of times, and also knows the synthesized duet sound. The bow plays the “Variation A” rhythm, and the only new element in this exercise is the left-hand coordination. This exercise can be done in one of two ways. For a student who shifts, they can play the entire duet alone.<sup>263</sup> For a student who does not yet shift, the appearance of the melodic note D presents an obstacle, because to play the harmony would require a shift to third position. In this case, the teacher and student can play the piece as a relay: the teacher can play all the D/B double stops and the student can play the remaining notes. Relay-style playing is a common feature of Suzuki group classes and lessons, so this would not present a mental challenge to a Suzuki student. Again, in the case of the *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* duet, the student can work through the variations until playing the theme with long bows.

### Example 30: “Twinkle ‘Variation A’ Etude”



Many Suzuki teachers have felt that the Suzuki repertoire, while it advances double stops linearly, contains too few double stops and presents them too sporadically to develop them well. The Violin Committee of the Suzuki Association of the Americas has taken that into account in their suggested supplementary repertoire for books 6, 7, and 8. Popular works like Edmund Severn’s *Polish Dance*, Vittorio Monti’s *Csardas*, and Bartok’s *Romanian Dances* are frequently assigned by Suzuki teachers and offer further repertoire to develop double stopping.

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<sup>263</sup> In the section on shifting, I discuss that one of the ways shifting is developed is to play *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* in all the positions, and in games where a different position must be used for every note. Therefore, if a Suzuki student has been trained to shift, adding the shift into this melody is not a new element.



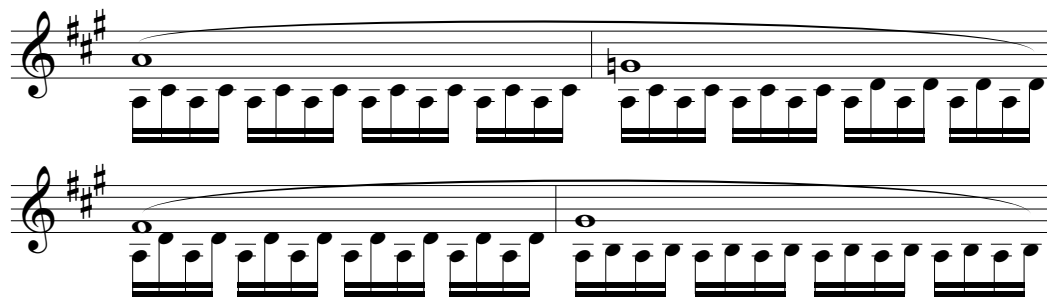
In addition to supplementing the Suzuki repertoire, many teachers have begun using certain etude series that are particularly melodic and musically satisfying: Kerstin Warburg's *Step-by-Step* series and Josephine Trott's *Melodious Double Stops*, in particular, have become commonplace in Suzuki teaching. While Suzuki philosophy states that students enjoy and accomplish technical study better when technique is learned through music, certain etudes do provide musical context equivalent to certain repertoire pieces. Also, many teachers feel that for more mature students, the introduction of some traditional etudes can be effective in teaching, and that students can be mature enough to endure some dry etude work because they appreciate the opportunity for bulk practice. The Suzuki approach does not preclude or disallow the use of etudes. Rather, the Suzuki approach functions on the unique premise that technique may be learned without the use of etudes, and for some teachers and some students who strongly prefer it, that arrangement lasts a lifetime.

A traditional teacher teaching double stops has a multitude of etudes to choose from. I have selected double stopping etudes according to Dorothy DeLay's etude sequence, because her sequence features the most beginner etudes of any of the canonical sequences, and therefore the levels match the Suzuki progression more than the other sequences. According to DeLay's official etude sequence the student would first work through Schradieck's *School of Violin Technics, Book 2: The Art of Double Stops*, followed by Franz Wohlfahrt's Op. 45, Book 2, nos. 53, 59, and 60, followed by Josephine Trott's *Melodious Double Stops*.

Where the Suzuki progression presents double stops in a gradually advancing manner, but sparingly, DeLay's sequence takes the opposite approach. Delay's sequence provides plentiful training in all kinds of double stops, but the progression is challenging from the start.

The very first double stopping etude in Schradieck's work is complex and demands several of the discrete skills used in double stopping:

**Example 31: Schradieck School of Violin Technique, Book 2: The Art of Double Stops, Etude no. 1**



The next double stopping etude in DeLay's sequence, Wohlfahrt Op. 45, Book 2, Etude no. 53, is easier than Schradieck's. Again, this etude again presents all three challenges of double stopping at once. For the student with very high aptitude, this may happen successfully, but for many students the teacher may have to isolate the student's attention to each technical challenge, one at a time. The teacher may have to simplify the etude for the student, breaking it down into easier versions before asking the student to perform the etude as written—this would not be an uncommon practice. This etude requires long, sustained bows: the teacher could ask the student to play an beginner version of this piece with shorter, staccato bow. This etude also requires the student to play in parallel thirds, where both fingers have to move and there is no open string for reference in tuning. To make this more approachable, the teacher can assign the student to play each line separately before combining them. Without modifications like these, for an intermediate student, this etude contains numerous challenges.

**Example 32: Wohlfahrt, Op. 45 Book 2, Etude no. 53**



In a later etude book from DeLay's sequence, a much simpler etude appears, in Josephine Trott's first double stop etude.

**Example 33, Josephine Trott, *Melodious Double Stops*, Etude no. 1**



Though this etude appears later in DeLay's progression, this piece isolates the skills in double stopping more than the previous two etudes. Trott's etude requires the student to sustain the bow on two strings for an entire measure at a time, but all other elements of double stopping are simplified. All the double stops in this etude include one open string, which eliminates the element left-hand coordination. Likewise, the aural challenge of perceiving and tuning the double stops is eased by tuning only one finger to an open string.

This illustration of sample paths toward double-stop proficiency using the traditional and Suzuki approaches illuminates several things. First, the lack of gradual advancement in DeLay's sequence illustrates a principal difference between Suzuki and traditional philosophies. Suzuki technical tasks must not ask a student to perform any skill that is not isolated and/or not fully prepared by the requisite supporting skills. It also demonstrates, in the Suzuki approach, the degree to which skills are isolated as they are developed. Double stopping skills truly advance one-by-one through the Suzuki progression. The differences between the DeLay sequence and the Suzuki progression also reflect the traditional attitude, earlier expressed by Wohlfahrt, that a

student should be expected to persevere through difficult tasks, whereas the Suzuki approach aims to keep students engaged by only assigning easily manageable tasks.

These factors parallel the reasons Suzuki chooses to teach technique through music and not through etudes. Suzuki was focused on keeping students motivated, and therefore he avoided overwhelming students. His linear, small-steps advancement in the repertoire kept his students feeling successful, and eager to advance, and providing enjoyable music in which to practice techniques greased the wheels for long hours of practicing. Ideally, the Suzuki approach and the traditional approach train the same fluency in double stopping for their students, but the two curricula present highly different learning experiences for the student.

### ***CHAPTER 3—CONCLUSION***

The goal of traditional pedagogy, explicated by Auer, Galamian, and Wohlfahrt, was to produce the finest violinists. It has succeeded. Suzuki's goal was to produce noble human beings with high ability, through teaching them to play the violin at a high level. He has also succeeded, and his method has produced many of the world's finest violinists. Each approach has the ability to produce world-class violin players, even though they come from different philosophies and use different methods.

The *Dounis Collection* and the *Flesch Scale System*, the numerous etude opuses of Ševčík and Schradieck, and the hour-by-hour practice routine outlined by Dorothy DeLay reflect the attitudes of Auer and Wohlfahrt about natural talent, the immense difficulty of mastering the violin, and long, hard path to success. The objective is violin success; dedication and perseverance are the path. Traditional violin education requires students to demonstrate grit, but the Suzuki Method tries to ease the student's experience by disguising technical work in musical experiences. Because the Suzuki student's etude material is derived from their review repertoire,

the Suzuki student's load appears lighter than the traditional student's. This is an illusion, though. Suzuki students' curriculum just as varied, their technical focuses just as specific, and they require just as much practice. The difference in the curricula reflect different philosophies, but they both teach technique, musicianship, and aesthetics to the same high level.

The lines between a traditional and a Suzuki teacher are not so clear, though, as the different curricula represent. In recent years, Suzuki and traditional educators alike have praised new publications in popular literature like *The Talent Code* and *Mindset*, which discuss skill development, talent, and ability as changeable, as products of work, as psychological and practical matters that can be manipulated so each person can succeed. Both traditional and Suzuki teachers have been influenced by the research and philosophy in these books. These volumes present a modern, empirical look at the theory that “all people have talent,” as Suzuki believed a century ago—they argue that talent is either present or can be created through circumstances, through dedication, or through positive self-talk. One's Suzuki or traditional background may be the lens through which these modern texts are read: Suzuki teachers may read and say “Amen,” while traditional teachers breathe a “thank goodness” at the hope these texts offer to those interested in developing mastery of a great technical skill. Suzuki has also, if not blended, mingled with traditional circles in recent years through the increasing inclusion of Suzuki programs in public schools, and through the increasing inclusion of Suzuki Teacher Trainers in official positions within the American String Teachers' Association.

## EPILOGUE

Suzuki's educational approach was in ways a departure and in ways an assimilation, and public perception has come to the wrong conclusions about where Suzuki fell as an insider or outsider. In America, he was considered an outsider for his nationality: It was assumed that Suzuki's students, playing in unison in perfect rows, practicing every day and beginning at such young ages, must be doing so under an educational system that reflected the competitive, one-track model of 1950s Japan. Suzuki set himself apart from the European conservatory tradition by teaching his students in groups, by trading etudes for fun and games. He was criticized for trading technique for success, producing multitudes of amateurs and few professionals.

Suzuki was an insider in both arenas he was thought to not fit in. He openly rejected the Japanese educational model he was thought to conform to; his educational approach aligned with the champions of Western education. His goal was to train children to be sensitive, not to become professional musicians. However, he produced numerous soloists, concertmasters, and other musical professionals.

Still, many find Suzuki's approach lacking. Critics argue that Suzuki students fail to read music, that they play with faulty technique, and that they play without expression, due to excessive group playing. Evidence of the quality of Suzuki's approach is distorted twofold. Today's evidence of Suzuki's teaching comes from his grand-students and great-grand-students. Carrying out Suzuki's philosophy today is a complex and widespread game of "Telephone." Each new Suzuki teacher unknowingly filters and translates the words of Suzuki and of their Teacher-Trainer. Teachers and parents individually interpret Suzuki's writings, which have been translated by a literal translator, and they spread Suzuki's philosophy by word of mouth to new Suzuki insiders and outsiders. The quality of Suzuki students in America spans the gamut: the

best have become leaders and soloists of our country's finest orchestras. More often, they clumsily plod through rehearsals in community and volunteer orchestras, with limited reading and technical ability. Some argue that Suzuki would have been happy with the sheer number of students who gained a love of music and learning, others argue that he would be dismayed at the poor quality of Suzuki teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Wherever Suzuki goes, it makes an impression and gains a reputation. This dissertation encourages readers to form opinions on the social, cultural, and educational appropriateness of the Suzuki Method based on facts, historical context, and the students Suzuki produced. The more music educators who are better informed about the history and makeup of the Suzuki Method, the more readers will interpret the approach with accuracy, the better the method will align and associate with the educational circles to which it belongs, the better Suzuki teachers will be trained, and the more sensitively and intelligently the approach will be delivered.



## APPENDIX 1—ETUDE SEQUENCES OF FAMOUS TRADITIONAL PEDAGOGUES<sup>264</sup>

### Leopold Auer:

- Kreutzer, Forty-Two Etudes (1799)
- Rode, Twenty-Four Caprices (1813)
- Rovelli, Twelve Caprices, opp. 3 and 5 (1820/22)
- Dont, Twenty-Four Etudes, Op. 35 (1849)
- Paganini, Twenty-Four Caprices, Op. 1 (1820)

### Carl Flesch:

- Kreutzer, Forty-Two Etudes (1799)
- Fiorillo, Thirty-Six Etudes (1790)
- Rode, Twenty-Four Caprices (1813)
- Sauzay, Le Violon Harmonique (1889)
- Vieuxtemps, Six Concert Etudes, Op. 16 (1846)
- Dont, Twenty-Four Etudes, Op. 35 (1849)
- Schradieck, Twenty-Four Studies (ca. 1900)
- Wieniawski, L'école-moderne, Op. 10 (1854)
- Sauret, Eighteen Etudes, Op. 24 (1886)
- Paganini, Twenty-Four Caprices, Op. 1 (1820)
- Ernst, Six Polyphonic Etudes (1865)
- (one can intersperse the following Ševčík exercises as one sees fit)
  - o Ševčík, School of Violin Technique, Op. 1 (1881)
  - o Ševčík, School of Bowing, Op. 2 (1895)
  - o Ševčík, Violin School, Op. 8 (1904/5)

### Ivan Galamian:

- Kreutzer, Forty-Two Etudes (1799)
- Fiorillo, Thirty-Six Etudes (1790)
- Rode, Twenty-Four Caprices (1813)
- Gaviniès, Twenty-Four Etudes (ca. 1800)
- Dont, Twenty-Four Etudes, Op. 35 (1849)
- Dancla, Twenty Etudes, Op. 73 (ca. 1870)
- Sauzay, Le violon harmonique (1889)
- Wieniawski, L'école-moderne, Op. 10 (1854)

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<sup>264</sup> M. K. Buckles, "A Structured Content Analysis of Five Contemporary Etude Books for the Violin" PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2003.

Dorothy Delay:

- Wohlfahrt Op. 45 Book 1
- Schradieck School of Violin Technique
- Whistler Introducing the Positions
- Flesch Scales
- Wohlfahrt Op.45 Book 2
- Trot Melodious Double Stops
- Whistler Preparing for Kreutzer Book 1
- Whistler Preparing for Kreutzer Book 2
- Ševčík Double Stop Op.9
- Kreutzer Etudes
- Sitt
- Dont Op.37
- Dancla
- Fiorillo Etudes
- Ševčík Op.8 Shifting
- Rode Etudes
- Ševčík Book 1 Part 4 Double Stops
- Dont Op. 35
- Gavinies
- Paganini Caprices
- Dounis , School of Violin technique
- Wieniawski, L'Ecole Moderne Op.10
- Ernst

## APPENDIX 2—REFERENCE LIST: DISCUSSIONS OF SUZUKI REPERTOIRE-REVIEW PRACTICES

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