

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1.) What is the Suzuki Method? Suzuki Talent Education, also known as the “Mother Tongue” method was founded by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki of Matsumoto, Japan. Based on the simple principle that all children can learn music in a similar way to that in which they learn language. Talent Education incorporates folk and classical music in a structured and creative environment.

2.) What is the difference between the Suzuki Method of music instruction and traditional instruction? The biggest difference between Suzuki and Traditional instruction is the LISTENING FACTOR. From the very beginning, Suzuki students are taught to listen to the repertoire they will be learning. At the beginning, it is to learn the notes and rhythms to their songs. As the student’s ability develops, they are asked to listen for dynamics, phrasing and accompaniment. Even the most advanced students are asked to listen to several different artists playing the same piece. This is then used as a Springboard for learning individual musical styles. The next difference between Suzuki and Traditional Instruction is the CONSTANT REVIEW of repertoire for technical advancement. It is very common to see Book 3 and 5 students playing Book 1 pieces, developing their shifting or vibrato or a bowing technique. This constant review of repertoire and learning technique makes students very able to go anywhere in the world and find a group of musicians to play with and have FUN!

3.) How do we know if my child is talented? Dr. Suzuki’s belief is that talent is educated not inherited. This is the perspective of a convinced environmentalist. If you are somewhat more prone to believe in heredity than environment - please stop and consider Suzuki’s statement “**There is little one can do about his heredity, but he CAN do something about his environment.**” There are some basic tenets we believe. All children are born with different levels of ability to conform to their environment. From that point on, the environment controls his development. The proper environment for good education must be twofold; teaching environment and

home environment. Both teacher and parent must believe in the potential of children. The next tenet we believe is **“there are no bad children, but there are bad teachers and parents. If they fail, it is our fault. We must find another way to teach them.”** We endorse the belief of Dr. Suzuki’s that talent is not inborn, and have adopted his practice of not-pre testing youngsters for “Talent” prior to beginning lessons. Dr. Suzuki believes that no child should study unless he/she wants to; he also believes; that given the proper environmental background, all children will eventually be motivated to study and appreciate music, and will love the sensitivity and discipline gained through musical instruction.

4.) What age do we start our child? We suggest age 4. We emphasize that this is a generalization, and there could be exceptions in both directions. We recommend that interested parents come and observe a few lessons before signing their children up.

5.) How long does my child need to practice? My answer to this question is dependent on a few things; the age of each child and their attention span. For the smallest children, Dr. Suzuki use to say “5 minutes with joy 5 times a day.” We understand that this may not be possible for you to achieve at home - so we say 12-15 minutes for preschoolers at least 5 days a week. As each child grows and matures, the time will lengthen; but we do ask that practicing happens at least 5 days a week. You will see good progress if you maintain this practice schedule. Our best students practice everyday of the week.

6.) What is my role as parent and How much time is required of me? Parental involvement is key to the success of your child’s musical education. For the youngest children, we encourage the parent to study the instrument through all the Twinkle Variations along side their child. This enables you to help your child at home develop good technique and also provides motivation for your child to play with you. For older child, this is not necessary, but many parent choose to learn also. You will need to have enough time to attend one private lesson and a group class each week.

You will also need to have enough time to ensure that good practicing is taking place at home between the lessons. Practice Make Permanent.

7.) Do we need to buy an instrument? How do we do that? How much does it cost? Every student needs to have their own instrument to study and practice on. Each student must have a properly sized instrument. Do not get an instrument before seeing your teacher. He/She will size your child and recommend the best sounding instruments. It is very important that each child feels comfortable with the instrument underneath their chin and that their left hand fits comfortably at the “butterfly spot.” We encourage students to buy an instrument since it will save you money on the long run. Most violin makers have a policy of trading up in size as the children grow. We also know of some good establishments that have rental programs with option to buy. Usually a student will be in one size for about a year - but that all depends on how fast each child grows. As long as you deal with a violinmaker who will trade-up, you will never be out of the money that you have already invested.

8.) Should two members of the same family study the same instrument?

Much depends on the relationship of the children, the age difference, and the competitiveness among the siblings. We have many families in the Program where 1.) several children study the same instrument and 2.) each child plays a different instrument. In both cases, children play together quite naturally and happily.

9.) Can we give this a few weeks try and see how it works? No. You must commit yourself and your child to a full year of study. (unless there is an extended illness or move away from the community) This is for the protection of your child. Children have infinite diligence and like repetitive, slow and steady development; adults are more easily bored and impatient. Dr. Suzuki use to say “The world is full of persons who were not given 3,000 chances to succeed.” (and thus consider themselves to have failed or worst yet; not to have talent. Maybe they would have achieved on the

3,000 or the 3,001st attempt.) Your commitment to the program will insure your child of receiving every possible opportunity for success.

10.) I have never played an instrument.... I am tone deaf.... will this hurt my child? You will find that violin taught by an experienced teacher is not that hard to play after all and that once you start a listening regimen at home - you will soon be humming and recognizing tunes. All you may have lacked is environment and opportunity to learn and grow together.

11.) I am a musician (Professional or Amateur), How can I be most effective as a Suzuki Parent? Do not attempt to teach your child at lessons. Attempt to understand the philosophy and methodology. Act in a parent role, with the teacher taking the lead. Do not put your child in competition with you, or expect too much of them. It is your attitude and everyday environment you provide, which will help your child most, not your past or present experiences.

12.) What can I do to prepare myself, my spouse and my child to start lessons?

- 1.) Read: ***Nurtured by Love*** by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki; ***To Learn with Love*** by William & Constance Starr; ***Teaching from the Balance Point*** by Ed Kreitman; ***Where Love is Deep*** by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki
- 2.) Purchase and listen to: ***Suzuki Violin/Viola/Cello recordings.*** (Hillary Hahn, violinist or Bill Preucil, violist recordings)
- 3.) Attend group classes. (please sit quietly and watch)