
talent
education
and
Suzuki

What the American Music Educator
Should Know
About Shinichi Suzuki

by John D. Kendall

music is not only sound
tone has a living soul
without form.

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Shinichi Suzuki
1966

MENC

Foreword

The publication of *Talent Education and Suzuki* is the first in a projected series concerned with developments in teaching in areas lying outside the territorial limits of the United States. It is entirely appropriate that the Music Educators National Conference should concern itself with this aspect of instruction for, in all areas of education since the close of World War II, there has been a pronounced increase of attention to comparative education as an important field of study. Among the most interesting developments is the Talent Education program originated in Japan by Shinichi Suzuki.

It is this movement with which Mr. Kendall is concerned in this descriptive and analytical report. Although it represents but a portion of post-war musical culture in Japan, its significance to music teaching in the United States is so relevant that it should prove thought-provoking to all members of MENC. The degree of technical control and musical sensitivity revealed by thousands of unselected (i.e. average) Japanese children who have been taught by Mr. Suzuki or his associates opens up a new vision of the musical capacities of little children. It calls into question assumptions commonly held as to the physiological and musical limitations of childhood.

Since most of the children taught under the Suzuki Talent Education program are of pre-school or elementary grade level, questions inevitably arise regarding our own degree of emphasis accorded these early formative years in terms of quality of instruction provided, adequacy of musical opportunities, the degree to which we may fully and attentively nurture each individual child's musical potentials. These and similar questions carry the import of Mr. Kendall's stimulating account beyond that of violin study alone, valuable though that may be.

One should note also how basic to the Suzuki system of instruction are those ways of learning which go far back into Japanese tradition: the atmosphere of sharing in the education of children by members of the family, an environment that encourages naturally the kind of development desired by the group, the virtues of review and repetition until mastery and security are firmly gained, the stress placed upon the development of the senses (in this case the art of hearing), the satisfaction of the young child's need for imitation through providing desirable models—always accompanied by courtesy, kindness, and infinite patience.

These elements are not new. They go back to the beginnings of civilization but they remain no less basic to child development in our sophisticated twentieth century. Perhaps these qualities are more natural to the Japanese than to the hurly-burly of the United States. Certainly the Suzuki system of instruction, Western though it may be in its musical orientation, is deeply rooted in traditional Japanese culture with its respect for beauty, its veneration for the past, and, in its traditional music, a centuries-old dependence upon learning through the medium of imitation.

We cannot readily transplant any system of education from the soil of its culture. I suspect that this may apply with some degree to the "method" developed by Mr. Suzuki. It is possible, however, to graft judiciously to our own those elements that give promise of success. There are a considerable number of these in the movement known in Japan as Talent Education and we are indeed grateful to John Kendall for the clear and explicit manner in which he has described them for us.

Theodore F. Normann, *Chairman*
Comparative Music Education Series

才能教育　鈴木鎮一氏　吉原甲蔵筆

Shinichi Suzuki