

# THE SUZUKI PHILOSOPHY

## WHO ARE SUZUKI STUDENTS?

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

A Suzuki student is simply any child whose parents have chosen to introduce their children to music through the Suzuki approach — a unique philosophy of music education developed over forty years ago by [Japanese violinist, Shinichi Suzuki](#).

## THE SUZUKI LEGACY

Shinichi 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.” Dr. Suzuki’s goal was not simply to develop professional musicians but to nurture loving human beings and help develop each child’s character through the study of music.



## EVERY CHILD CAN

More than forty years ago, 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, and constant repetition are just some of the special features of the Suzuki approach.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT



When a child learns to talk, parents are involved in the musical learning of their child. This involvement is mirrored in the Suzuki method. The parent will attend lessons with the child and serve as “home teachers” during the week. One parent often learns to play before the child, so that he or she understands what the child is expected to do. Parents work with the teacher to create an enjoyable learning environment for their child.

## EARLY BEGINNING

The early years are critical for developing mental processes and muscle coordination. Listening to music should begin at birth; formal training may begin at age 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 has aural knowledge of 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 increasingly 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 or 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 during which they learn from and are motivated by each other. In the same way that speaking with other children helps develop foundational language skills, participation in group classes helps students develop their musical language and work together as an ensemble.



## GRADED REPERTOIRE

Children do not practice exercises to learn to talk but rather 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.

## RELATED LITERATURE

[\*Nurtured by Love\*](#) by Shinichi Suzuki

[\*To Learn with Love\*](#) by William and Constance Starr