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Chapter 1

The Suzuki Philosophy

Introduction

Talent Education

Talent Education, the teaching method developed by Shinichi Suzuki, has grown to a world-wide movement and has revolutionized theories of education. Suzuki began this work in 1945 and still teaches with undiminished vitality, inspiring teachers and students with his dedication and humility.

Dr. Suzuki was born into the family of a violin manufacturer in Japan in 1898. He began playing the violin as a young adult. After only a few years of study in Japan, he traveled to Germany to further his violin studies with Karl Klingler. It was in Germany that he was exposed to great European musicians; he was also strongly influenced by Western culture. During this time he met his wife, Waltraud.

Suzuki brought European music to Japan on his return from Germany. He spent several years teaching by the traditional methods. The first seeds of what was to become the Talent Education Method came to him when he was asked to teach a four-year-old boy. As he searched for a way to teach such a young child, Suzuki had an inspiration about applying the way children learn to speak their language to music education.

Suzuki analyzed and developed his ideas over the next few years, but his work was interrupted by World War II. After the war he was invited to teach violin at a school near Matsumoto. He accepted with the condition that he be allowed to put his ideas into practice, in order to bring joy to the lives of all children. He knew, after the devastation of the war, that his life's work would be to do this by expanding their abilities through playing the violin.

Mother Tongue

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki's method of education is based on a single idea—he calls this idea mother tongue. Dr. Suzuki observed that all children learn to speak their own languages (mother tongues) with great accuracy, complete with local inflections. This he believes demonstrates a remarkable ability. Children are surrounded by these language sounds from birth, and he reasoned that if the children were surrounded by musical sounds to the same degree, they would develop an equally remarkable ability in music. This is the concept of mother tongue.