

SUZUKI PHILOSOPHY AND METHOD

Report of the workshop organized by the
Partage Rise Network and INEPE



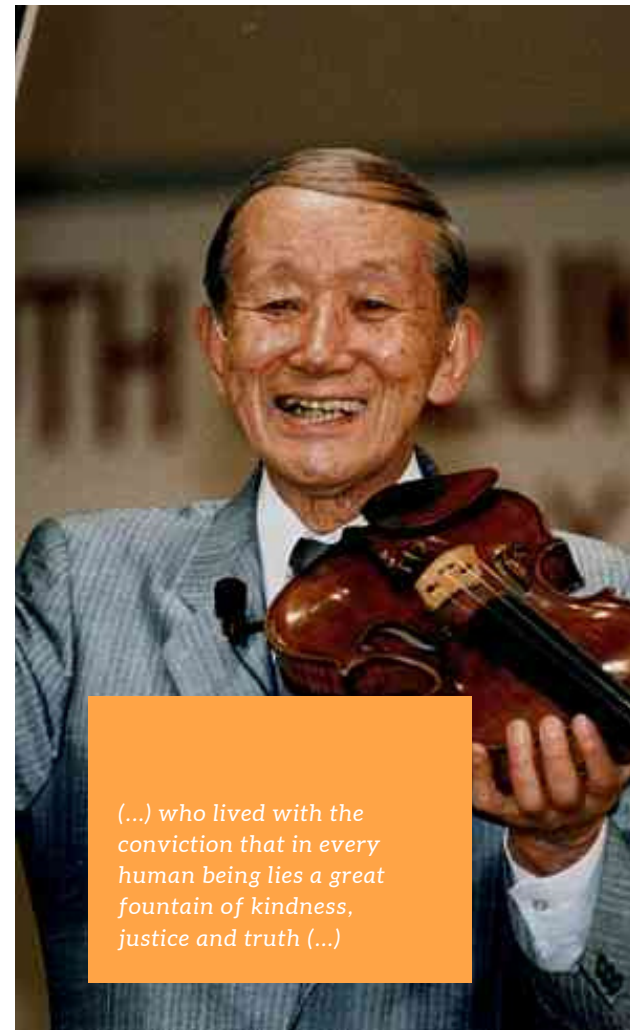
By Andrea Raza Álvaro

Shinichi Suzuki

A great visionary, violinist and educator who lived with the conviction that in every human being lies a great fountain of kindness, justice and truth—ready to be shared with one's neighbor when, provided there is a suitable environment, education has love as its basis.

Born: October 17, 1898, Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan. Died: January 26, 1998, Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture, Japan. Shinichi Suzuki, one of twelve children of a violinmaker, was the creator of a method that bears his name.

At the age of seventeen, having been deeply moved by a recording of Mischa Elman performing Schubert's Ave Maria, Suzuki taught himself to play violin. He spent some time in Tokyo studying, before continuing his education in Germany at the age of twenty-two, with instructor Karl Klinger. In Germany he would also meet Waltraud, who would later become his wife, life companion, and giver of unconditional support.



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Upon returning to Germany in the early 1930s, seeking an appropriate way to teach young children to play the violin, he noticed the great ease with which all children learn their mother tongue, and the efficacy of their parents' methods in teaching them

This event of learning the mother tongue, apparently as obvious as common sense, shows the immense potential that all children have—from birth—to develop new abilities when the environment is suitable. He based his ideas on this fact, and so developed his Method, which would lead to the foundation of the Institute of Talent Education in Matsumoto in 1945.

Suzuki died on the 26th of January, 1998. His Method has been embraced by countless conservatories, schools, and institutes dedicated to music instruction around the world.

Throughout his life he received nine honorary doctorates, and among his former students were prestigious soloists, principal violinists for some of the most important professional orchestras in the world, and teachers holding chairs in world-class conservatories and music schools.

Nevertheless, his greatest legacy is the wake of girls and boys, parents and teachers from around the world, who were inspired by the dreams of Dr. Suzuki to open their hearts and plant a seed of hope which—through music—carries a light of peace and better understanding in the world.

The Method of the Mother Tongue. Why do we study in the same way that boys and girls acquire language?

Let us learn the secret of success in which we all learn our mother tongue! Let us analyze how children learn their language.



- They are born into a world where everyone speaks this language.
 - Infants absorb everything.
 - They are surrounded by love and encouragement.
 - They experiment with their voice and different sounds.
 - They begin to imitate what they hear.
 - The greater the incentive, the greater the response from the infants.
 - They create sounds without analysis or understanding.
 - Great pleasure from learning.
 - They imitate words, phrases, sentences.
 - They are continually surrounded with spoken and written language.
 - All infants learn in their own manner and pace.
 - One should read to infants, without pressuring them to learn to read.
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- By the age of three, many children master the grammar of their mother tongue. They simply do it.
- There is no need for explanations.
- Once the children are fluent in speech, they will learn to read and write.
- Speech (the ability to physically produce sounds) and having the language in the ear (vocabulary, order, grammar), are necessary preparations for learning to read.
- Grammar and analysis will follow in a natural process.

The Suzuki Philosophy

Upon seeing the enormous potential of all human beings to learn their mother tongue (with the exception of babies born with some auditory disabilities), Dr. Shinichi Suzuki noticed the enormous potential the children have to learn anything. It all depends on various elements to come together, so each child may bloom in a beautiful way.

The main premises of Suzuki's philosophy can be summarized like this:

- A profound respect for the human being. To be a philosophy that respects the rhythm and learning style of everyone.
- The earlier the better, but never too late. An infant is "exposed" to his/her mother tongue from when it is in the womb; that is how babies absorb the sounds of their mother tongue right from gestation. By being surrounded by their mother tongue, they hear everything around them and bit by bit begin to internalize and use language to communicate. But it is never too late to learn!
- The total support and presence of the family: in order for a person to learn and communicate with their mother tongue, it is essential to have the presence of people around them: to speak to them, to sing to them and to communicate with them. Therefore, in transposing this premise to learning, the participation and the (caring and committed) involvement of the family is vital for the "success" of the child.
- Talent is not innate: The philosophy of the mother tongue breaks with the concept that talent is something innate—that a person is born with talent or without talent. Talent, like ability, is something that is developed. It all depends in great measure on the environment.
- The importance of the environment: how can we provide children a suitable environment that may stimulate their desire to learn? Young children do not learn through their intellect nor with explanations. They learn better by absorbing from their environment. Small children receive all the stimuli from their environment for learning their mother tongue. They are born into a world where everyone speaks and communicates. We must provide to the children an environment that stimulates their love and desire for learning.

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- A positive way to teach: boys and girls have an insatiable curiosity to learn and a natural pleasure when they learn new things. How can we keep this motivation alive? Let us remember the joy and satisfaction of the parents and other family members when the baby says her/his first words. They always congratulate and encourage the baby! Let us think on the moment when baby takes their first steps.
- The happiness that the family experiences for each new thing learned by its children is reflected in the attitude, in the eyes, of the girls and boys. On the other hand, negative criticism and punishment, discourages the boys and girls and has a negative effect on their self-esteem. As teachers we must remember that our sincere care for our students and our passion for learning are contagious.
- To learn from one another: as with Popular Education (PE), and as highlighted by Paulo Freire, “Nobody is born completely formed: it is through our own experience in the world that we become what we are”. Education is a collective act.
- “Character first, then music” In the Suzuki Method, we first teach respect, listening, empathy, healthy self-esteem and confidence, to strengthen the family bond. In every class we develop perseverance, effort and the joy of a job well done. These human elements have a vital importance. In terms of education, we can think on this premise in how we envision ourselves, in our community project, INEPE: if the human is cared for, the academic shall follow.

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- To build a better world: Dr. Suzuki’s legacy is that--through music and a different way of educating--we can foster (and foster within ourselves) noble, sensible human beings. We may be positive transformers of our planetary society. Humans of peace, that together may create a better world.

The Philosophy applied to the Method

- How do boys and girls learn: we must always consider how to provide each child a suitable environment that stimulates their desire to learn. As teachers, it is crucial to discuss this important matter with the family. Boys and girls learn everything holistically (not segmenting). They learn with their feelings.



- What surrounds them and what has significance for them is marked in their minds and hearts. As educators and parents, it is fundamental to strive to generate environments that encourage the desire for students to learn. Let us focus on changing the environment, not the child!
- **Preparation:** As is the case with Popular Education (PE), we always consider internalizing and understanding the WHO of our educational community; in other words, their individual, bio-psycho-evolutionary characteristics. In this manner, we generate learning processes that take into account their contexts, experiences, interests, questions. As educators we must make the ground fertile to create significant classes and workshops, respecting the characteristics of the students, motivating and stimulating their interests and desires to learn. In this manner, we are generating **transformative educational environments**.

- **Step by step:** Each human being develops their abilities step-by-step. Therefore, it is fundamental that each element of practical knowledge exercised with the students should be divided (segmented) into tiny units or steps to generate better comprehension. One must master one step before advancing to the next, performing focused repetitions. We then present the next step in learning and repeat the process. It is essential to congratulate the “tiny” successes (which are gigantic for the children!).
- **Pace of learning:** each person advances at their own pace and in their own way. If we stop to think of a baby that is growing, (learning to sit, to crawl, to walk, to speak) we never want to force that they walk at a predetermined age or say a certain number of words. It is pointless to try to teach a child to walk when he is not ready, or to pressure a baby to speak before she is not ready.
- By knowing the WHO of our educational community, we will know profoundly the rhythm and manner of learning of the entire group, and of every student. This allows us to generate dynamic learning processes, incorporating various didactic and methodological tools that cater to these individualities and to the group as a collective.
- **Cumulative learning:** This is one of the most important factors in the success of the development of language. Once a baby learns a word, she will never forget it, she will continue using it while she augments her vocabulary. The continuous use of the known vocabulary allows children to achieve a fluency of the language, to develop their memory. The constant repetition allows boys and girls to internalize the sounds in the ear, as well as the physical sensation of sound, and eventually, its significance.

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- It is important to generate educational processes with successive approaches, where girls and boys don't mechanize and forget what they learned the previous year/month/unit, but rather that they may deepen and apply what they continue learning.
- **100% responsibility of the educators:** It is vital to remember that to succeed in generating these transformative learning environments, it is entirely the responsibility of the educators to have an investigative spirit, a creative spirit, to respond to the individuality of each student. It is the responsibility of the educators to find success in the learning OF ALL STUDENTS, and to watch to generate significant learning opportunities in everyone.
- If we must modify the content, then we must; we must find how to reach our groups, each and every one. We must not label our students. Success in the learning process depends 100% on the teacher and how he or she guides the family, to build a true community around the educational process.
- **Everyone can!:** We come to the conclusion that every boy, girl, youth and generally every human being CAN LEARN –and do so–well. If we succeed in generating a rich environment, with families collaborating in the educational process, and teachers that assume responsibility with care and dedication, all will succeed to live a learning process with happiness. //



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