

Situating Suzuki Music Pedagogy's Values in the Literature

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Abstract

The Suzuki or Talent Education approach has not been expressly described as a holistic pedagogy, yet its child-centered and progressive teaching philosophy (Eubanks, 2015), developed by the Japanese violin teacher Shinichi Suzuki (1898-1998) and applied worldwide (International Suzuki Association, 2021), has many of the hallmarks of holistic education, whereby the accent lies on “cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child” (R. Miller, 2000, 1st para.). The embrace of the whole person and an interconnectedness between all elements of life and of being are among the main principles of a holistic framework (J. P. Miller, 1998, 2011; J. P. Miller et al., 2014; R. Miller, 1992). These are shared in the Suzuki approach, whose “emphasis throughout is on the development of the whole child” (International Suzuki Association, 2021, 4th para.). In addition, the concepts of happiness, love, and compassion, which form an important part of holistic education (J. P. Miller, 1981, 2012, 2018), similarly are very much present in the Suzuki philosophy (Hendricks, 2011, 2018; Suzuki, 1981).

While holistic music education is occasionally the focus of scholarly inquiry (Dutton, 2015; L. N. Gould, 2009; Lee, 2016; Smolen, 2000; Wright, 1996), and although a variety of music teaching methods are being applied in private studios and in schools (Adjepong, 2021; Hallam, 1998; Sarrazin, 2016), the traditional separatist conservatory approach remains the predominant standard for high-level instrumental music teaching and learning (Gaines, 2018; Knieter, 2000). Given such a reality, the holistic aspects undergirding the Suzuki pedagogy, which is known for producing highly capable musicians (Brathwaite, 1988; Niles, 2012), merit more attention. Through a literature review of Suzuki-related works, this article aims to illuminate the pedagogy's values, demonstrating its holistic kinship.

Keywords: holistic pedagogy, Suzuki or Talent Education approach

Full of life, a tree puts forth buds, and flowers bloom beautifully up and down its branches. And human life unfolds in precisely the same way as these activities occur in Nature; I always reflect on this marvel. What, then, is the ultimate form to be attained by this human life force? It is to love everything and never stop seeking truth, goodness, and beauty. This is true for myself, and also for you. (Suzuki, 2012/1983, p. 3)

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hallmarks of holistic education, whereby the accent lies on “cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child” (R. Miller, 2000, 1st para.). The embrace of the whole person and an interconnectedness between all elements of life and of being are among the main principles of a holistic framework (J. P. Miller, 1998, 2011; J. P. Miller, Irwin, & Nigh, 2014; R. Miller, 1992). These are shared in the Suzuki approach, whose “emphasis throughout is on the development of the whole child” (International Suzuki Association, 2021, 4th para.). In addition, the concepts of happiness, love, and compassion, which form an important part of holistic education (J. P. Miller, 1981, 2012, 2018), similarly are very much present in the Suzuki philosophy (Hendricks, 2011, 2018; Suzuki, 1981).

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The Suzuki Method

Briefly, Suzuki pedagogy is based on an early-years-start of instrumental learning; strong parental involvement and "strong child-parent learning relationships" (Ferro, 1973, p. 33); daily listening to high quality musical recordings to mimic mother tongue language immersion; emphasis on aural learning with sound-before-symbol teaching and memorization instead of reliance on note reading; a scaffolded teaching approach whereby tasks designed to learn to play a musical instrument are broken down into small, manageable parts; repetition and maintenance of previously mastered pieces; and instead of employing etudes and abstract exercises, the use of games and a graded common repertoire of increasing difficulty to teach technique and musicality (Landers, 1984/1980; Mills & Murphy, 1973; Suzuki Association of the Americas, 2003). Regular group classes supplement the private lessons, while performing opportunities abound, in which children support each other and "[t]he friendships made also help to motivate the children" (Guerriero, Mitchell, Einarson, Hendricks, & D'Ercole, 2016, p. 8). The group classes offer a myriad of social and musical benefits to students and parents, as identified in a large-scale study that queried North American Suzuki teachers (Guerriero et al., 2016).

Throughout, there is enormous encouragement from teachers and parents, "fostering an attitude of generosity and cooperation" (Suzuki Association of the Americas, 2021, "Every child can learn," 7th para.). For example, instead of teachers and parents focusing on what may be wrong with how a student plays, the highlight is on what sounds good and what a student is doing well. Elements to be improved on are then addressed piecemeal to avoid discouraging the student. Praise for each student regardless of level or aesthetic rendering is similarly meant to avoid comparisons among students. This is achieved through advocating for a non-competitive musical environment where every child is expected to eventually play beautifully and at a high level.

Crucially, Suzuki teachers routinely remind students and parents to contextualize musical learning as part of their growth as human beings and their wider role in fostering a better world. Not meant as an end in itself, as the piano pedagogue Landers (1984/1980) wrote after an in-depth investigation and analysis of the Suzuki or Talent Education philosophy, this philosophy "encourages the learning of music as a means to a happier life" (p. 9), while its ideology fundamentally "believes in the basic goodness" (p. 9) of humankind.

Purpose of the Literature Review

This article surveys published and non-published written source material on the Suzuki approach, be they books, theses, dissertations, journals, newspaper articles, or texts from websites. The purpose is to complement the existing literature of works on holistic educational practices. At the same time, the pedagogy's overall representation in the scholarly literature and non-scholarly, popular discourse is considered. This is useful, because Suzuki pedagogy is "[o]ften misunderstood as simply a rote method for learning the violin" (Hendricks & Bucci, 2019, p. 90). A good deal has been said about the Suzuki approach that has revealed and contributed to a misinterpretation of the pedagogy's aims and methods (Gardner, 1993/1983), compelling practitioners and researchers to issue multiple clarifications and explanations (Barber, 1991; Eubanks, 2015; Garson, 1968, 1970; Hendricks, 2011). The extent to which the wider holistic paradigm as such is misunderstood or underappreciated is not examined here, but warrants further investigation, as it is an alternative to and a critique of dominant educational practices (J. P. Miller, 2011; R. Miller, 1990), likely opening itself up to counter-critiques within the mainstream culture. An example of a particular misreading of one of the holistic tenets in the Suzuki approach pertains to its non-competitive spirit (Mills, 1973a), the sense that each child be allowed to develop at its own pace, and which, on occasion, is dispensed with among North Americans (Henke, 2018). "Some parents and teachers become fanatical about the number of pieces and volumes completed" (Barber, 1991, p. 79), so that the further along a student is in playing level in comparison to others, the more prestige this is thought to bring. Other mischaracterizations have a strongly racial component (Yoshihara, 2007). This demands awareness and denunciation of Western discriminatory practices towards Asian people (Lam, 2015). In examining American mainstream press accounts of Japanese Suzuki students' performances that introduced a harshly critical tone among the general public concerning how Suzuki pedagogy is regarded, Yoshihara (2007) wrote: "These characterizations took on more ominous tones when combined with the discourse of the 'yellow peril' that was revitalized in the period of Japan's economic penetration into the U.S. market from the 1960s onward" (p. 44). Thibeault's

(2018) research revealed that, “Criticism [of the Suzuki method] was sometimes stunningly xenophobic and racist in ways that are painful to read” (p. 21).

Seeing the Suzuki approach to instrumental learning through a holistic early childhood education lens and situating it as an alternative to the competitive, examination-based Conservatoire model with its military roots and exacting training (Bowman, 2012; Hebert, 2015; Rubinoff, 2017), may help to clarify Suzuki pedagogy and render it perhaps more universal, arguably with elements from Eastern and Western thought combined. Barber (1991) has contended that making a distinction between traditional and Suzuki teaching is not straightforward. Teachers who apply the Suzuki approach are known to rely on the same composers and instrumental pedagogues as those music teachers deemed to be traditional, while teaching styles are continuously evolving. Barber (1991) found that “the differences between Suzuki and traditional teaching are mostly in the beginning stages and are philosophical rather than technical” (p. 80).

Some researchers have made the case that Shinichi Suzuki’s philosophical influences were derived from the East (Bauman, 1994; Shimahara, 1986). By contrast, Eubanks (2015) established that “Suzuki had extensive exposure to American and European Progressive educational traditions” (p. v), leading Suzuki’s pedagogy to align closely with early 20th-century progressive pedagogical thinking. This article takes that analysis a step further and places the Suzuki philosophy in the camp of holistic education due also to the spiritual dimension found in Shinichi Suzuki’s writings. This includes the many references to a life force, or a soul being connected to music, as well as Suzuki’s (1986) expressed hope for the future making of a “high spiritual culture” (p. 75), rather than a material one. As J. P. Miller (2011) observed, even though there are shared roots and attributes, it is the recognition and the nurturing of the spiritual aspect alongside the other dimensions in humans that distinguishes holistic education from humanistic and progressive approaches.

Locating and identifying works

Briefly, an account follows of how works were identified for inclusion in the literature review on Suzuki pedagogy, which was comprehensive and not limited to holistic elements. Nevertheless, it became self-evident that the holistic ideal permeates virtually all writings by Shinichi Suzuki.

In general, rather than sift through every possible published source that emerged in keyword searches in various databases, specific authors and their bibliographic sources were consulted. Monographs on university library shelves that were in the vicinity of those works that had already been identified as being essential, were inspected, thereby locating works that may have otherwise been overlooked (Shaw

Bayne, 2008). Similarly, titles, names, abstracts, reviews, articles, and other texts on websites and in journals and their catalogues were electronically perused.

All the published writings by Shinichi Suzuki that were available in the English language were found (Suzuki, 1973, 1981/1969, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1996/1949, 2012/1983), as well as published and unpublished works, such as theses and dissertations, on the violin educator and the method. For the latter, an annotated bibliography on the Suzuki pedagogy was consulted (University of Denver, 2019), as well as a bibliography of almost 100 works that was compiled by O’Neill, Hendricks, Mitchell, and Guerriero (2016) and by Mitchell and Guerriero (2016), which was identified by perusing the website of The Aber Suzuki Center of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point’s College of Fine Arts and Communication. The Aber Suzuki Center’s research arm co-sponsors with the Suzuki Association of the Americas its biennial International Research Symposium on Talent Education (IRSTE) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, featuring largely empirical research studies on Suzuki-related music teaching and learning (Duke, 1999; Einarson, 2016; Einarson & Trainor, 2016), although according to IRSTE’s own accounting only 15 were categorized as empirical studies (Einarson, 2016). Examples of qualitative research that have been presented or disseminated through IRSTE include Hendricks (2011) and Jenkins (2009). The earliest listed entry is by Kendall (1961), who is one of the pioneers of the Suzuki method in the United States. Instrument-specific research articles, theses, and dissertations centered mostly on the violin and the piano, but others also covered guitar, flute, clarinet, and saxophone (Einarson, 2016). While Suzuki music books will not be reported on here, Kreitman (1998) notes that the individual instruments have their own curriculum within the Suzuki method: “Each instrument has a well-considered anthology of musical pieces that spans several volumes of music. All instruments begin with *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* and end with a major concerto from the classical music period” (p. 3). There are a number of studies about the technical aspects of the Suzuki method (Hofeldt, 2000; Y. Lee, 2012; Yu, 2012), but these are similarly not the focus in this article. Other methods of teaching and learning music, such as Kodaly, Orff, and Dalcroze, or instrumental methods like the Essential Methods series, the Belwin String Builder Course for Strings, and the O’Connor Violin Method, have also not been examined in this article. However, a comparative analysis of different methods has been conducted by Goolcharan (2018), Landers (1984/1980), Su (2012), and Yu (2012), for example. Also, Hendricks (2018) analyzed select music teachers whose qualities of compassionate teaching overlapped with those of Suzuki.

Finally, as they frequently offer literature reviews of some kind as well, bibliographies in theses and dissertations were examined, which proved helpful and added potential sources

(Dawley, 1979; Ebin, 2015; Eubanks, 2015; L. N. Gould, 2009; Madsen, 1990). Encyclopedic searches also provided useful and concise overviews (de Ferranti et al., 2001; Marrocco, Jacobs, & Troutman, 2001; Shibata & Kanazawa, 2001).

Insider perspective

Having devoted at least 10 years to intensively immersing myself in the North American Suzuki community as a Suzuki parent, followed by doing research into aspects of the Suzuki method and philosophy (Henke, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), I see myself as somewhat of an insider. However, as a researcher, positioning myself with the help of specific literature as an outsider looking in, gives me an added perspective, one that is not unknown among anthropologists, who “have long articulated the value of being an outsider to a culture” (Miller Cleary, 2013, p. 92). On the one hand, this allows for a more dispassionate view whereby certain issues can be perhaps more easily recognized and analyzed. On the other hand, Geertz (1983) wrote about the need for anthropologists doing fieldwork “to see things from the native’s point of view” (p. 56), which meant that in order to truly be able to understand a society and its culture, it was necessary “to think, feel, and perceive like a native” (p. 56). However, Geertz (1983) also added that what was important for gaining insight was to be “searching out and analyzing the symbolic forms—words, images, institutions, behaviors—in terms of which, in each place, people actually represented themselves to themselves and to one another” (p. 58). In other words, it was not enough to be an insider or to identify with others, and to imagine oneself to be similar. Informed by experience, Geertz (1983) recommended examining a variety of representations, including texts that encompassed a culture’s being and thinking.

Yet, in writing about engaging in cross-cultural research, Miller Cleary (2013) cautioned that the binary positioning of who is an insider or who is an outsider may not be so clear-cut: “Researchers have come to embrace the ambiguity resulting from the bundles of both researchers’ and participants’ identities and have found the need to unpack their implications” (p. 92). Instead of being one or the other, one can alternately or even simultaneously be researcher and participant; insider and outsider, which is how I experienced the process of familiarizing myself with the relevant literature.

Works by and About Shinichi Suzuki

Published writings by and about Shinichi Suzuki and the pedagogy, in addition to unpublished theses and dissertations, offer good source material for an analysis of the values associated with the Suzuki approach and the pedagogy’s spread to countries beyond Japan (Honda, 2002). They provide insights into what scholars and practitioners have

articulated concerning Suzuki music education, which is also known as talent education or *sai-no-kyoiku* (Orford & Garson, 2014/2006). Zeroing in on the beliefs that fuel the Suzuki approach, both as it was conceived by Shinichi Suzuki and then applied over time by practitioners, provides an additional context within which to interpret the meaning of Shinichi Suzuki’s articulated pedagogy. Further, it allows for an understanding that considers the intent and the worldview behind the words and the practice of Suzuki music education. As Shibata and Kanazawa (2001) have stated, “Suzuki’s educational method is not a mere process of education, but [is also] his philosophy and its application” (para. 2), confirming the need to identify its guiding values and belief system beyond the factual characteristics of the method. Also important at the outset is a recognition that the method is variously referred to as an approach, as well as a philosophy, in order to allow for flexibility and interpretation and to distinguish it from being understood as a program with set rules (Behrend, 1998; Bigler & Lloyd-Watts, 1979), thus enabling individual calibration of teaching and learning. Further, interpretive fluidity over time is revealed in a recent study which indicates that after the death of the violin educator in 1998, the method in Japan underwent some changes, making its application more technical, less playful, and less oriented towards Shinichi Suzuki’s humanitarian ideals (Akutsu, 2020). However, literature and courses emanating from the Suzuki Association of the Americas illustrate that Shinichi Suzuki’s guiding beliefs still take a central place in North American Suzuki teaching and learning (Suzuki Association of the Americas, 2003), while research into some of the holistic elements of the Suzuki approach in North America indicates their enduring and valued presence (Hendricks, 2011, 2018).

East-West nexus

Both Yoshihara (2007) and Mehl (2009) emphasized the significance of Western influences on Shinichi Suzuki. Hersh and Peak (1998), too, perceived a mixture of influences. Dewey’s impact on Shinichi Suzuki, as a major Western force in Japanese educational thought (Kobayashi, 1964), was noted by Eubanks (2015). As Yoshihara observed, on the one hand, attributing Japanese qualities to Suzuki music education suggests an Orientalist framing of the pedagogy and a search for the Other as constituted through the West’s cultural domination of a racialized music pedagogy, which in fact has much in common with Western progressivism and holistic educational principles. The pedagogical ideas to which Shinichi Suzuki was exposed, have been well documented by Beauchamp and Rubinger (1989), and more specifically by Eubanks (2015), who noted that “Suzuki was raised in an environment where John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, and Johann Pestalozzi had significant influence” (p. 39). On the other hand, Shinichi Suzuki’s philosophy may also be traced to an Indigenous Japanese perspective (Shimahara, 1986), which in turn, along with

Confucianism, could have been of influence on Dewey's thinking when the latter visited Japan, as Lewis (1995) and Eubanks (2015) suggested. Cross-cultural East-West exchanges have been investigated by Mehl (2009, 2014), Yang and Saffle (2017), and Wade (2005).

Besides the issue of its provenance, how Shinichi Suzuki's philosophy is to be understood and applied raises the question of interpretation, as observed by Barrett (1995), who cautioned that this violin educator's words and approach to music education should not be taken as a literal set of rules to be followed:

Often there is an almost compulsive, fanatical obsession to do just exactly everything Dr. Suzuki might ever have said to do every day. If one truly attempts this, there would be little time for anything else. [...] Observing Dr. Suzuki teach in his studio at the Institute in Matsumoto, I have been struck with the relaxed, friendly atmosphere. It is not the studio of a rigid, slave-driving master. Somehow, parents and teachers who get so wrapped up in the techniques and routines miss the essential spirit that really gives life to the Suzuki Method. (p. 107)

Barrett (1995) surmised that Zen Buddhism could be regarded as the guiding spirit behind the Suzuki approach (Shunryu Suzuki, 1970), while Bauman (1994) also identified the Shintō belief system as being of influence. Carter (2001) provided a background to both practices, linking especially Shintō to a reverence of nature: "The Japanese character is formed by several strands of influence, not the least of which is Shintōism. Furthermore, it was Shintō, long before Zen had arrived on the scene, that had understood nature as divine" (p. 62).

Suzuki's (1986) positive view towards nature—during walks marveling at the scenery where "black and dark grey mountains stood side by side" (p. 97)—along with feelings of kinship with animals reveals a philosophy that is reminiscent of Rousseau's (1762) embrace of nature as a wholesome environment for learning. However, Jorgensen (1997) critically addressed Shinichi Suzuki's penchant for finding evidence in nature to try to prove the effectiveness and naturalness of the idea about how music is learned. According to Jorgensen (1997), "It is simplistic and inappropriate [...] to model educational systems on those in the natural world" (p. 17), noting also the following:

The approach is tempting (and Rousseau, Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Suzuki have each used analogies from nature to explain how education works), but the analogy between social and physical events can be pressed only so far and eventually breaks down. (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 17)

Shinichi Suzuki was not alone among contemporaries for revering nature and taking it as a model to understand educational processes in children. Montessori (2004/1948), for example, attributed great cosmic importance to nature as a site of freedom and learning for children. Shinichi Suzuki's inclination to connect with nature similarly expresses a holistic relationship with other creatures and the surrounding world.

Interconnectedness of music education

Shinichi Suzuki's aim "to create persons of a beautiful mind and fine ability" (Selden, 1982, p. 18), leading to what Suzuki (1973, 1986, 2012) envisioned would be the making of a happier and better world, points to the perceived relationship of the learning and the playing of music and the responsibility Suzuki (1973) felt for the well-being of the world. This cannot be regarded as a separate issue that stands apart from educational or aesthetic matters. Shinichi Suzuki's efforts to connect the arts with a student's environment and a student's being illustrates a holistic attitude to teaching, an approach which J. P. Miller (1998) in *The Holistic Curriculum* explained is about respecting harmony, an essential fitting together of many parts that in a traditional, compartmentalized learning system would remain fragmented.

As a music scholar, Jorgensen (2003), too, albeit not in the same spiritual or cosmic sense, has expressed an interconnectedness between music, education, and society: "Musicians and educators are engaged in a fundamentally social, political, and cultural enterprise" (p. xiii). E. Gould (2009) has echoed this view in that music education, "like all disciplinary studies, exists in and of the social and natural worlds" (p. xi). Much more than a music pedagogy, it is a philosophy that sees the attainment of musical ability and its process as a way through which to create happy children and a world filled with peace.

The ideal of a peaceful and "civilized" (Suzuki, 1981, p. 29) world filled with beauty and happiness is directly linked to Shinichi Suzuki's own experiences. Shortly after the end of World War II and the defeat of Japan, in a country now ravaged by the fallout from the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, as well as the firebombing of Tokyo and other Japanese cities, Suzuki (1996/1949) wrote the following:

Who is able to look without tears at present-day Japan as it is and its people as they are? When will we be able to see again a beautiful world where we yield to one another, help one another, and live with warm hearts, hand in hand? At present, our desolate hearts are occupied with assertion of rights, selfish obsession, and self-interest. While the bitterness of

such hearts swirls around the entire country, the ignorant nation is tracing the path of degradation. Can our base, miserable present plight represent after all the true nature of the Japanese people? Is the essence of three thousand years of tradition and Japanese culture built over long years no more, after all, than this? (p. 6)

Suzuki (1996/1949) strongly suggested that beyond addressing food shortages and the general misery in which Japan found itself postwar, “a more fundamental problem exists in education” (p. 6). Written shortly after the war, Suzuki (1996/1949) bemoaned that “we have failed to demonstrate sufficient ability to keep pace with the cultures of advanced countries of the world” (p. 4), encouraging the Japanese to implement early childhood education. Critical of the education system in Japan at the time, Suzuki (1996/1949) bemoaned its ineffectiveness: “Millions of good books and incessant advice have scattered like rain in the past and present. Yet humanity is straying farther and farther away from beautiful hearts, beautiful life” (p. 24). Preoccupied with the inescapably widespread social problems and eager to find a solution, Suzuki (1996/1949) expressed a vision that very young children could be taught to pursue excellence in a variety of subjects, not only music, through what Suzuki (1996/1949) called ability development:

If we can produce ten thousand outstanding people, this already means nurturing the real ability that enables us to become an outstanding nation. The country must at least do its best to create these ten thousand outstanding individuals. This is a crucial enterprise that today’s Japan must start before anything else. If it is realized that every child or every person is capable, and if general innovative education is advanced creating an era when this ability can be demonstrated, our future will be brilliant. (p. 72)

Fundamental to an understanding of the music pedagogy is Shinichi Suzuki’s desire to prepare a citizenry of the highest personal, cultural, and intellectual caliber by enabling young children to reach their greatest spiritual and artistic potential: “I just want to make good citizens. If a child hears good music from the day of his birth, and learns to play it himself, he develops sensitivity, discipline, and endurance. He gets a beautiful heart” (Cook, 1970, p. 76).

The deprivations and “immense suffering of Japan’s innocent and precious children” (Barber, 1991, 75) due to World War II led Shinichi Suzuki to want to protect all children and indeed whole nations from the possibility of similar pain and violence in the future. Invoking the sentiment of the celebrated cellist Pablo Casals, who had attended a large concert of Japanese Suzuki students in Tokyo, Suzuki (1973), while addressing an American public, expressed the wish to

strengthen the connection between an individual child’s fulfilment and a wholesome world in the making:

Let us work together to build a new human race. I urge you to explore and develop new paths for the education of children so that all American children, through your efforts, will be given the happiness which they deserve.

Pablo Casals further said:

It may very well be music which will save the world.” These words express perfectly the hopes for the future of mankind by all persons engaged in music. And I am profoundly convinced that this is the mission that has been laid upon our shoulders. (p. 16)

The idea that musical ability could lead to an improved world rejects any atomistic notions that a musician’s quest for technical mastery of an instrument can be decontextualized and exist for its own sake. An appreciation for music and all the arts in developing and “educating a really beautiful human spirit” (Suzuki, 1981, p. 61) is vital. As J. P. Miller (1986) explains, the holistic worldview is well served by music and poetry, which can bring about a spiritual awakening that transcends the limitations of logic and competence: “In the holistic curriculum the student is not reduced to a set of competencies that must be ‘performed’ or an abstract set of mental processes; instead, there is an acceptance of the richness and wholeness of human experience” (p. 194).

Shinichi Suzuki’s spiritual encounter with music as a young man was a pivotal moment in the development of the philosophy. After attending a particularly meaningful chamber music concert in 1924 in Berlin, which was the violin educator’s home for several years, Suzuki (1986) described the experience of listening to the music of Mozart: “My soul was carried away to the world of that serene, noble soul, the highest realm of spiritual beauty which humans on earth can attain” (p. 1). Emanating from what became the chief tenet of Suzuki music pedagogy was that music was to be taught with the express purpose of creating better, more noble human beings for a better world (Suzuki, 2012/1983, 1986). Suzuki (1981/1969) believed that fostering mutual love and happiness through tapping into the spiritual experience of beautiful musical moments would “help in civilizing this world” (p. 29), and direct humanity away from violence and from killing. Young children were foundational in this process, as they could be moulded to develop the right values, and the right character infused with care and love towards others at the same time as they learned music (Suzuki, 1981/1969, 1981).

Hope for the world

The predominant impression that emerges from what friends, associates, and Suzuki practitioners have written about Suzuki is that there is an enormous amount of respect for Shinichi Suzuki the person, as well as for the method (Garson, 2001; Hermann, 1981; Madsen, 1990; Rowan, 2013), as evidenced by Honda (1978), who wrote a biography of Shinichi Suzuki on the occasion of Suzuki's and Suzuki's wife, Waltraud's, 50th wedding anniversary:

I stayed up nights and wrote this with all my heart for the sake of the person to whom I owe much. [...] I put down my pen here with heartfelt respect and gratitude to the great task and wonderful personality of Shinichi Suzuki who lit a great candle of hope for the people of the world. (p. 71)

People speak kindly of Shinichi Suzuki, both in the literature, as well as in live oral settings, such as workshops and lessons, and those who met Suzuki invariably took a genuine liking to this violin pedagogue (Honda, 1976, 1978; Timmerman, 1987). Suzuki practitioners have also felt gratitude for a method that helps them teach successfully (Wilson, 1984/1980) and offers "a vision of world harmony and world peace through music" (Marangozis, 2016, "Details," para. 4), a perspective that reflects the notion of music being in the service of effecting geopolitical harmony (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010; Urbain, 2008).

In addition, economic success may be a supplemental factor in the expressions of appreciation for Suzuki as person and as philosophy. Many of the authors on Shinichi Suzuki and the method are published by Summy-Birchard, the imprint held by Alfred Publishing Company. In Japan, Suzuki-related materials are published by Zen-On. It would be in the commercial interest of such publishers and related institutions to disseminate positive Suzuki texts that reinforce an upbeat message of a popular music pedagogy and its venerable originator. After all, the material ramifications of a music education method that sees "more than 400,000 Suzuki students studying in 46 countries and regions" (Talent Education Research Institute, 2012, "About the Talent Education Research Institute," para. 4) are significant and cannot be ignored (Henke, 2019). Informally, it has been suggested that professional self-interest may motivate Suzuki teachers to engage in an enthusiastic, albeit unofficial, marketing effort (Anonymous former Suzuki teacher, personal communication, July 2017). However, no scholarly or journalistic studies investigating such a scenario were found. Hermann (1981), Honda (1976, 2002), and Garson (2001) did mention the professional engagement of Sheldon Soffer Management of New York for Shinichi Suzuki's annual student tours to the United States and elsewhere, undertaken to promote the method through concerts and workshops. Soffer's work on Shinichi Suzuki's behalf has been credited with facilitating the method's entry into North America in the mid 1960s (Elspas & Kusmin, 2021), first at

the Music Educators' National Conference in Philadelphia and then at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York (Garson & Orford, 2006). Already in the spring of 1958, however, American music educators meeting as part of the American String Teachers Association at Oberlin College had become aware of Suzuki's pedagogy, as they watched a film of a 1957 graduation concert in Tokyo of 750 students from Suzuki's Talent Education school playing Bach's Double Concerto. This generated a lot of enthusiasm (Cook, 1970), "made an overwhelming impact on its American audience" (Behrend, 1998, p. 8), and in effect, spawned "the founding of the Suzuki movement in North America" (Dawley, 1979, 1).

Critiques and rebuttals

Frequently, the reference to Suzuki's name is preceded by the honorific title of Doctor (Collier Slone, 1988/1985/1982; Kempter, 1991; Koppelman, 1978; Shephard, 2012), a designation that is the result of several honorary doctorates Shinichi Suzuki received from American institutions of higher learning (W. Suzuki, 1987). Among practitioners this is considered as an expression of respect (Cooper, 2014), but among some sceptics of the Suzuki approach, it is seen as a sign of inauthenticity, meant to bolster credibility of the Suzuki brand (O'Connor, 2014). In-depth critiques penned by practitioners of the method are hard to come by, nor have any studies on Suzuki the person or the method by those from outside the Suzuki community been identified. Rather, an enthusiastic explanation of the method, its historical beginnings, along with a summary of its North American pioneers is far more likely (Garson, 1968). However, a critique of the Suzuki approach has been articulated by Gardner (1993/1983), which is also mentioned in Guilmartin (1990), and which encapsulates some of the most often heard apprehensions surrounding the pedagogy (Landers, 1984/1980; Wickes, 1982). Drawing on Taniuchi's (1986) study, as well as on Gardner's (1993/1983) own observations based on a visit to Shinichi Suzuki's school in Matsumoto, Japan, and Gardner's experience as a Suzuki parent, Gardner (1993/1983) initially identified a series of laudable characteristics in Suzuki music pedagogy. A developmental psychologist, as well as a gifted pianist early on in life (Melby Gordon, 2017), Gardner (1993/1983) then also named a number of concerns regarding the Suzuki method, the first being as follows:

All regimens have their costs, and some equivocal aspects of the Suzuki method should also be noted. The method is very much oriented toward learning by ear—probably a highly beneficent decision, considering the age of the children who are enrolled. [...] On the other hand, since the learning of notation is devalued in the Suzuki method, children often fail to master sight reading. Shifting to a notation-based strategy after the ages of six or seven would seem to be a desirable ploy, if the habits acquired by ear-and-hand have not become

too completely entrenched by this time. The very plasticity that initially allowed rapid learning may already have given way to a rigid and difficult-to-alter style of performance. (p. 377)

Notwithstanding the general rejection among Suzuki practitioners of viewing the pedagogy as a fixed method, instead of as an adaptable approach or a guiding philosophy, Gardner (1993/1983) called attention to a perception of its seemingly inherent rules and its ordered program by naming it a regimen. It was thereby suggested that a controlling authority or system was at work, which called up Foucault's (1977/1975) regimen of truth after Foucault's pivotal *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* in which underlying societal and institutional disciplinary and punitive structures were identified.

Sound before symbol

Gardner (1993/1983) began the critique by addressing what lies at the core of the pedagogy. According to the Suzuki method, which emulates the natural process of first language immersion and prioritizes playing by ear, delayed note reading is supposed to free students from thinking about the written notes on the page to being able to concentrate on playing an instrument with good posture, good tone, and real musicality (Craig Powell, 1988). Gardner's (1993/1983) criticism that Suzuki students are frequently unable to develop proficiency in sight-reading was dismissed by Landers (1984/1980), who wrote that "the reading of music should begin only when it is most beneficial to the learning of music" (Landers, 1984/1980, p. 14), and also stated that the Suzuki method's early beginning of music study, which emphasizes hearing and producing sounds, is actually beneficial to later note and sight-reading:

Because the student is already used to sounds and concepts associated with creating music by the time he starts to read, he learns to read in long, horizontal lines rather than vertically; for example, he learns to associate the appearance of a phrase as notated with the sound of a phrase he has been playing and hearing. Learning to read in large units is very beneficial to later sight-reading. (Landers, 1984/1980, p. 122)

Landers recognized that by listening to music, students were developing their aural imaginations, which helped them to conceive of sound concepts that went beyond the momentary sounding, opening an expansive continuum that incorporated past and future sounds. Interestingly, Meyer-Denkman (1977), who was not a Suzuki practitioner but a composer and a pedagogue who had an interest in making new music accessible to young students, developed sound listening exercises for children in order for them to be more receptive to auditory concepts with which 20th century composers were experimenting. The intention was to help children

become accustomed by ear to the sounds they might later produce. One approach was to encourage children to render their own visual representations of the abstract oral phenomena they were exploring. Meanwhile, Craig Powell (1988), as a Suzuki practitioner, was another steadfast voice in the rebuttal of the charge that Suzuki students are weak readers:

For years I have been hearing the criticism of individuals outside the Suzuki movement that Suzuki students do not learn to read music. I have thought to myself what a ridiculous notion it is. Of course, they can learn to read music. There is nothing inherent in the method or philosophy to prevent learning the reading of musical notation. (p. 41)

In fact, Suzuki piano students begin to read right after book 1 (the first out of a series of ten books in the curriculum) of the method (Craig Powell, 1988; Kataoka, 1985, 1988; Koppelman, 1978), while Suzuki violin students start with reading after book 3. Starr (1976), one of the earliest Suzuki string pedagogues in the United States, suggested that reading might have to commence even earlier:

Many Western children, having started as 'older' beginners, need to be able to read before they are into Book IV, since they have opportunities of playing in school orchestras and will need to develop the ability to read music with facility. (p. 141)

Starr (1976) added the recommendation that daily music reading should be part of the children's music study routine. Behrend (1998), another pioneer of the method in the United States, as well as a Julliard graduate and long-time faculty member, agreed that note reading was important enough to be tackled early on. Establishing the Suzuki-based School for Strings in New York City in 1970, Behrend (1998) advocated that violin students could begin to learn to read "as early as the middle of Book 1" (p. 49). Having visited Shinichi Suzuki and the school in the 1960s in Matsumoto, Behrend (1998) was familiar with how the method was approached in Japan, noting that there, "the Talent Education movement places little or no emphasis on reading skills, either the initial reading for accuracy, or the ultimate skill of sight reading" (p. 33). Nevertheless, Behrend (1998), who was eager to uphold the pedagogical principle of playing by ear, also cautioned that reading may interfere with "the power of the Suzuki ear and memory training" (p. 47), as well as proper attendance to posture. Therefore, reading was to be kept to a minimum and was not to be used to learn the pieces that students were supposed to absorb by ear from listening to recordings. Remarkably, Suzuki (1985/1956), too, had already foreseen the need for students to hone their reading skills by publishing in 1956 a Japanese language-based music book with exercises that later would appear in English as *Note Reading for Violin*.

Gardner's (1993/1983) observations and conclusions were likely based on a specific set of experiences of the Suzuki method, which certain authors suggested must be seen in view of a teacher's own ideas and applications. Barber (1991) noted that "there is no such thing as a 'pure Suzuki' teacher, since each of us adapts many ideas and techniques to evolve our own manner of teaching" (p. 76), with teachers availing themselves of a range of pedagogical and musical materials. Landers (1984/1980), too, pointed out that there are variations in the method "in certain aspects from teacher to teacher" (p. 28) and Craig Powell (1988) similarly stated: "The Suzuki method does not give us a specific note-reading approach. It is left to the individual teacher to develop this" (p.43). Bigler and Lloyd-Watts (1979), who variously referred to Suzuki pedagogy as a method of education, a philosophy, and an approach, as did Behrend (1998), indicating the variability of how the program is enacted by individual practitioners, wrote the following on the question of note reading:

One of the most frequent complaints about North American Suzuki violin and piano students is that they are not good sight readers; however, this is not a problem unique to Talent Education, because many non-Suzuki students are not good sight readers either! (Bigler & Lloyd Watts, 1979, p. 62, italics in original)

In their handbook for Suzuki teachers, parents, and students, Bigler and Lloyd-Watts (1979) like Landers (1984/1980) and Starr (1976), offered suggestions along with a list of recommended supplementary literature to build students' note reading and sight-reading skills. Susan Gagnon, a Suzuki teacher trainer, who has lectured widely within the North American Suzuki community, uses the popular *I Can Read Music* series by the Suzuki string pedagogue Martin (1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d), finding that Suzuki-trained students have an advantage over those trained through traditional music education, which, by contrast, employs note-reading from the beginning:

I do think that learning by ear initially is the most essential element of the Suzuki method. In order to do this, kids must 'sing in their heads while they play'. This skill is not natural for all kids but figuring out the notes by themselves by ear requires this, so they develop the ability to 'sing to their fingers' and therefore play in tune and more musically. This also helps them develop ownership and will help them eventually become independent learners. These kids can become better sight readers than traditionally trained students by helping them learn to sight sing the notes when they first start to read. (S. Gagnon, personal communication, March 21, 2018)

Having the ability to immediately imagine a sound picture in their heads as they read and transmit this instantaneously to

the fingers, rather than having to translate the visual symbol to a sound whose concept is not aurally present, is, according to Suzuki practitioners, what sets Suzuki students apart from the traditionally trained music students. Comeau (2012) conducted a review of the literature on the question of playing by ear and the harm it might do to reading and concluded "there are no reasons for concern with regard to music reading" (p. 4). In fact, Comeau (2012) found that already in the 18th century, Couperin (1716) and Rousseau (1762) both advocated playing by ear, an approach "that favoured sound-before-sign" (Comeau, 2012, p. 5). Comeau also identified more recent pedagogues, like Durand (1996), Schleuter (1997/1984), and Whiteside (1997/1938) with similar beliefs that "a strong connection must be established between the ear and the instrument before the eye connection is developed" (Comeau, p. 5).

Notably, the notion of a sound before symbol approach in the Suzuki method bears some similarity to the literacy methodology in Steiner's holistic Waldorf school movement in that pedagogically, both delay engagement with abstract notes or letters and words on the page, as they prioritize an emphasis on the use of young children's imagination in the holistic development of reading skills, especially through aural and other activities (Shank, 2016; Smolen, 2000). As in the Suzuki method, repetition and memory work inform the Waldorf approach to the development of reading skills (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). Such an approach explains why Shinichi Suzuki felt that repetition of pieces that the child already knew, one of the tenets of the method, was essential, because it would foster self-confidence, happiness, and a solid repertoire that the child could rely on.

Repertoire

Beyond the issue of delayed note reading, Gardner (1993/1983) leveled "A more serious charge against the Suzuki method" (p. 377), at least partially concerning the repertoire in the Suzuki music books, which were described as being limited and parochial due to their focus on "exclusively Western music from the Baroque through the Romantic periods" (p. 377). The critique suggested that young children might be negatively affected by being deprived of exposure to, for instance, contemporary or world music. Noteworthy in this regard is the violin pedagogy of Létourneau (1969), who went to Japan in the 1960s to study the Suzuki approach. Upon return to Canada, rather than disseminate the method as it had been demonstrated, Létourneau (1969) adapted it for a Québec market by developing a unique version of the Suzuki method, using the folk music of Québec instead of the many German folk songs that are featured in the Suzuki repertoire (Suzuki, 1958, 1967/1955), which Létourneau considered to be less appealing (Rhéaume & Ménard, 2014/2006). Another string pedagogue from Québec whose method was more closely based on Suzuki's ideas, but who created special

arrangements of French-Canadian folksongs was Cousineau (1989). According to Garson (1968), Cousineau was actually, “The first Canadian to establish a Suzuki school in Canada” (p. 8), after spending several months in Japan studying with Shinichi Suzuki in the 1960s. In writing about Cousineau, Poussart (2014/2006) suggested that Cousineau and Suzuki respected and supported each other’s work: “He [Cousineau] developed a learning model for young people based on the teaching method of Shinichi Suzuki, who called Cousineau the most important violin teacher in North America” (para. 1). This suggests that Shinichi Suzuki was not averse to tweaks or adaptations to the method, at least abroad, if these would make it more effective.

Landers’ (1984/1980) answer to the criticism that the Suzuki repertoire is limited was that it is not meant to be an overview of what is available. The repertoire is intended to be “a ‘basic alphabet’ that presents a comprehensive technical and musical approach through excellent baroque, classical, and some romantic literature” (Landers, 1984/1980, p. 127). Unlike in traditional music pedagogy, children do not have to study scales and etudes in the Suzuki approach. Rather, the student “develops his technique through the music itself and the technical exercises he practices are all drawn from the music” (Behrend, 1998, p. 15). As Shinichi Suzuki wanted to ensure that children would enjoy playing the music while they were learning technical and musical elements, the graded pieces in the Suzuki music books were chosen with care and only after undergoing a lengthy trial period during which they were “child tested” (Behrend, 1998, p. 15). Landers (1984/1980) pointed out that children often will have finished studying all ten volumes of the Suzuki books by the time they are nine or ten, leaving plenty of time to explore different composers, but it was up to the teachers to help their students to add to the repertoire with other music. Both Landers (1984/1980) and Behrend (1998) offered an extensive list of supplementary music books with repertoire for different instruments, mentioning also other authors with similar lists, such as Tucker Graham (1981).

Meanwhile, Mills (1974) wrote a book that contained a plethora of musical games, many suggested by parents of music students. These had been developed in the spirit of establishing a fun connection to music learning and music making, as Shinichi Suzuki encouraged playfulness and games to keep children interested, tapping into the holistic benefits of play and learning (Piaget, 1951). Mills (1974) added suggestions on how to build a recording library at home, offering a list of a recommended musical repertoire, as well as the major recording artists at the time, by instrument. Chamber ensembles were also suggested and included the masterful Grumiaux Trio, the Beaux Arts Trio, the Borodin Quartet, I Musici, and many others whose exceptionally beautiful sounds could inspire the students.

An additional factor that concerned Gardner (1993/1983) about the Suzuki method is the “slavish and uncritical imitation of a certain interpretation of the music—for example, a Fritz Kreisler recording of a classical sonata” (pp. 377-378). While Suzuki teachers see the recommended daily listening to recordings of musical pieces as a way to replicate immersion conditions of first-language or mother tongue learning, Gardner (1993/1983) considered this to be problematic, because, “children receive the impression that the important thing in music is to imitate a sound as it had been heard and not to attempt to change it in any way” (p. 378). Landers (1984/1980) disputed the notion that Suzuki students merely imitate without using their own personalities as part of the musical expression, for “individuality is emphasized through the student’s listening to and playing different interpretations. As the student matures, he develops more and more desire to hear other interpretations and to formulate his own interpretive ideas” (p. 122). In other words, students listen to multiple recordings by different artists who each model their own version of the same piece.

Individuality and group learning

Gardner’s (1993/1983) apprehension about the loss of individuality in performing music is undoubtedly rooted in the image many have of the Suzuki method, which is of students playing in unison in big groups during concerts. Barber (1991) cautioned that what people may think they know about Suzuki group teaching is based on media representations that have focused on “the large group performances that are often presented giving the impression that this is the way they [Suzuki students] are trained” (p. 78), while the bulk of the teaching happens, in fact, in the private or individual lessons.

The purpose of a large group performance of younger, less advanced, and older, more advanced students playing together at the same time is to establish a bond among the students through the common repertoire and to erase any notion of hierarchy. This custom, such as a “Tutti play-in” (Southwestern Ontario Suzuki Institute, 2021, “What is a ‘play-in’?”, 1st para.), is a staple at Suzuki summer music camps or so-called Institutes, and represents a celebratory coming together of teachers, students, and their families, who spend a week with people from far and wide attending private and group lessons, rehearsals, and concerts. Through non-judgmental formal and informal group concerts students learn to think of themselves as part of a music community of fellow learners. Whereas many traditional musical performances are an opportunity to admire soloists or perhaps to notice the errors and the failings of a performer, Suzuki group performances encourage children to focus on the pieces they are playing with others, thereby overcoming any potentially overblown sense of their own importance while on the stage. For Suzuki, this was linked to a belief that

any display of self-centeredness impacted negatively on the beauty of a performance, while a person's good and caring character would help the music. Suzuki (1981) firmly believed that "great talent and a deep, beautiful feeling in the heart are closely tied together" (p. 60).

Meanwhile, Yoshihara (2007) pointed out that while it makes up only a part of the overall pedagogy in the Suzuki method, the aspect of group learning and group performance has been typically seized upon as an attribute of an unmistakable Japanese quality in Suzuki music education, presenting "a binary construction of Western individualism and Japanese conformity" (p. 43). Although the Suzuki method may have been assumed by some to be the product of Japanese philosophy and tradition (Peak, 1996), Mehl (2009), in consulting the work of, among others, Fink (1977), Kolneder (1998), Malm (2000), and Dawley (1979), found that there were "precedents" (Mehl, 2009, p. 4) in the West for many of the components of the pedagogy, including group classes and performances:

Group instruction on the violin was common in Europe. In the German-speaking countries, violin became a required subject for elementary school teachers, who were often taught in groups. [...] In 1897 the London-based instrument manufacturer and publishing house, J.G. Murdoch and Company established the Maidstone Movement of group violin instruction and in 1905, the National Union of School Orchestras. At the regular festivals at Crystal Palace or the Royal Albert Hall hundreds or even thousands of young violinists performed in groups. (Mehl, 2009, p. 4)

Nevertheless, Suzuki critics had zeroed in on group playing by Suzuki students as being typically Japanese and non-Western. Giving additional examples that range from similarities of the Suzuki method in the violin instruction methods of the 19th-century German music pedagogue Christian Heinrich Hohmann, as identified by the research of Fink (1977), to "the New Education Movement that spread through North America and Europe" (Mehl, 2009, p. 7) during Shinichi Suzuki's early life, Mehl (2009) thus raised the question whether the supposed Japanese qualities in the pedagogy were really not derived instead from European sources to which a young Suzuki may have been exposed during travels to Germany in the 1920s.

Violinist Louise Behrend expressed a related idea. Already a well-versed violin pedagogue in New York in the 1960s, Behrend went to Japan, as part of an Asian concert tour, to learn from Shinichi Suzuki. Convinced of the effectiveness and universality of Suzuki's method and eagerly applying the Suzuki teaching approach, Behrend identified that it had echoes of earlier European string pedagogues, like Lucien Capet and Luigi Silva: "He [Suzuki] had by himself come up with so many ideas that were universally found in different places" (Behrend quoted in Lieb, 1993, p. 29).

Sacrifice of time and parent involvement

Commenting on the key aspect of parent involvement in the Suzuki approach, Gardner (1993/1983) lamented "the interpersonal costs" (p. 378) of the pedagogy, observing that children sacrifice quite a lot of their time to learn to play a musical instrument. Further, mothers, who frequently have been the ones to be the designated Suzuki parent to help with practicing, as Gardner (1993/1983) noted, equally expend an extraordinary amount of energy and time on supporting their child's musical learning. Seeing a need, Sprunger (2005) wrote a popular guide for parents on happier practicing. However, Gardner (1993/1983) questioned what a mother would have gained from such intense investment, other than seeing the child be able to play music, given that "the mother's own personal skills and qualities may not have been significantly enhanced, a result that (at least to Western eyes) is lamentable" (p. 378). Previously, Mills (1973b) had encouraged parents of Suzuki students to practice self-awareness by reflecting on their own growth and to ask themselves questions, such as: "Am I becoming more musical myself?" (p. 206) and "Am I gaining in understanding children and their needs?" (p. 206). Mills (1973a) urged parents to share in Suzuki pedagogy's "musical and spiritual search" (p. 31) for their own, as well as their children's benefit, evoking the holistic concept of the whole person's interconnection to others and to the larger world (J. P. Miller, 2011).

Yet, Landers (1996) to some extent agreed with Gardner's (1993/1983) point. In their Suzuki Education Working in America, Landers (1996) set out to explore some of the challenges and potential misalignments of American society and the Suzuki pedagogy as it was first developed in Japan. While Gardner (1993/1983) appeared to assume that a mother's involvement in the child's music study would not have added much to her own development, various Suzuki parent guides painted a different picture (Starr & Starr, 1983). The example of violinists Scott and Lara St. John's mother, Sharie, who became a musician herself through her children's Suzuki lessons, also disputes Gardner's (1993/1983) assessment that Suzuki mothers would be stagnating in their own growth, since Sharie St. John found fulfillment in a new career precisely because of the Suzuki parenting (St. John, 2001, "Lara's Mom and Dad," para, 1, 2, 3).

The close relationship between parent and child that is encouraged and relied on for the child's musical learning was based on Shinichi Suzuki's sense of advocacy and respect for the child, whose happiness was paramount and could be further ensured by scaffolded learning: "Develop ability from what the child can already do, and that ability will promote the happiness of doing things better and better" (Suzuki, 1981, p. 21). By respecting a young child's bond with its

mother, Shinichi Suzuki tended to the child's multidimensional needs. The pedagogy's embrace of parent involvement in a child's learning was an early recognition of what researchers would come to understand as a holistic approach in teacher-parent partnerships (Levinthal de Oliveira Lima & Kuusisto, 2020).

Nature versus nurture considerations

Another crucial tenet of the Suzuki approach is that "talent is not inborn" (Suzuki, 1981, p. 3), and that every child can learn to play a musical instrument beautifully at an advanced level (Suzuki Association of the Americas, 2003). According to the Suzuki approach, what is required to attain musical mastery is a nurturing environment and the willingness to put in the time to practice under the encouraging and watchful eye of a loving parent and an excellent teacher who can provide a happy lesson conducive to learning (Suzuki, 1981/1969, 1986). Shinichi Suzuki's efforts to treat talent as teachable and within reach for everyone was a radical notion, as borne out by Kingsbury's (1988) ethnographic study of a North American music conservatory which analyzed the pervasive concern with the presence or lack of perceived musical talent in such an environment. The assumption that talent cannot be taught and is unattainable for many reinforces social hierarchy, as Kingsbury (1988) found:

Talent, in its countless manifestations, represents a cultural experience of inevitable, indeed natural, social hierarchy. And in spite of the seemingly fervently held 'truth' that 'all men are created equal,' talent is very much a positive value in present-day Western culture (p. 82).

The idea that talent could indeed be developed through a pedagogical program, especially musical talent, which had long been held to have mystical, rare qualities in Western thinking (Kingsbury, 1988), was eagerly embraced by many music teachers who saw positive evidence of Shinichi Suzuki's method in the films and the live performances of young Suzuki students they observed (Garson, 1968).

Making the case that even the Japanese bush warbler, a songbird cherished for its calls, must learn its songs and that knowledge and ability are not automatically inherited, Suzuki (1981/1969) was adamant that "ability is not innate" (p. 14), but that it could be fostered. Ebin (2015, 2016) proceeded to seek evidence of these assertions to find out "whether the foundational claims behind the Suzuki Method are valid" (p. 18), ignoring, however, the difficult to capture essential elements of imagination, emotion, and aestheticism in music production and appreciation, passing over the strong relationship that exists between art, music, literature, and nature (Hoekstra, 2007; Sum, 2014). Moreover, in examining Shinichi Suzuki's claims about musical learning, Ebin relied on ethically and morally problematic studies on animals

(Nuffield Council on Bioethics, 2005), while excusing the debilitating experimentation on them to examine Shinichi Suzuki's democratically minded ideal of convincing people that musical ability is accessible to all.

Human musical ability is a topic that has fascinated scholars for a long time. However, it is nearly impossible to empirically investigate certain aspects of human musicality. This is because it is nearly impossible to truly control many aspects of musical exposure in young children in an effective or ethical way. In contrast, birds can easily be raised in isolation, or with specific other birds. (Ebin, 2016, p. 21)

By unquestioningly relying on scientists' "studies where birds have been deafened" (p. 72) or on "research of birds raised in isolation" (p. 73) to test if birds will still sing, compared to those birds "when raised with a companion who was devocalized" (p. 75), and a study that "bred chicks such that some chicks would be one-eye dominant while others would be bred to use both eyes equally" (p. 98), Ebin (2015), perhaps inadvertently, reminded other scholars of the importance of questioning what the purpose is of any study and to insist on studies that do not objectify and do harm, but show empathy for all life forms. Previously, already, Suzuki (2012/1983) had declared the impossibility of finding evidence as to whether talent existed:

It seems to me to be terribly futile to argue about something that we have no way of measuring, and to ascribe results to it. Instead, from my years of experience as a music educator working with young children, I have come to a point where I am no longer able to accept the existence of specific natal traits such as musical ability. [...] Rather than being generated from within as a result of heredity, I propose that all cultural abilities develop within while adapting to external environmental conditions. (p. 19)

Although Suzuki (2012/1983) recognized that "the sensitivity and speed with which humans adapt to their environments" (p. 20) and the "observed differences" (p. 19) between people suggest that some learn more quickly than others, the violin pedagogue rejected the idea that genetic predisposition determines musical or cultural ability. Instead, Suzuki (2012/1983) explained that at the Talent Education schools, "we operate on the assumption that talent is not inborn, and that every child develops in proportion to her life experience and the efforts she expends" (p. 23).

Wanting certainty, Dawley (1979), too, had wished for more research on the Suzuki approach already some 40 years ago. By then, it had been established in the United States for close to two decades and was by this time being taught to "thousands of American children" (Dawley, 1979, p. 1) in private studios and notably also in public schools. The latter

was thanks to the Eastman School of Music's Project SUPER, an acronym for "Suzuki in Penfield-Eastman-Rochester" (Garson & Orford, 2006, para. 4), the result of which can still be seen in operation in schools within the Penfield Central School District outside of Rochester, New York (Penfield Central School District, n. d.).

Considering the Suzuki method's potential beyond music education and Shinichi Suzuki's own professed aspiration to apply the principles of the pedagogy more generally, Grilli (1987) and Landers (1984/1980) spoke out on this topic. Grilli (1987) advocated that the Suzuki philosophy be used in preschool education for all subjects, not just music, based on the results in "Dr. Suzuki's experimental kindergarten in Matsumoto" (p. 21) during Grilli's stay in Japan in 1971. Landers (1984/1980) gave some weight to an analysis of Suzuki piano instruction, but similarly agreed that "Suzuki is concerned above all with nurturing children from birth through use of a Talent Education approach for all subjects" (p. 42). Discussing also other learning theories in comparison to the Suzuki approach, including those of Piaget and Montessori, Landers (1984/1980) reiterated an oft repeated theme of finding fulfillment through optimal learning and identified Suzuki education's goal as follows:

In conclusion, the Suzuki educator should emphasize the Talent Education objective of cultivating an artistic appreciation and discipline in people to help them achieve happier, more successful lives. Whether the curriculum is math, music, English, science, or another subject, Talent Education does not necessarily strive to create professionals in these specific areas but rather desires to create 'professionals' in the area of life—in living. Learning a subject well will help one learn to live well. (p. 44)

Co-founder of Sony Corporation and author of *Kindergarten is too Late!* Ibuka (1977) equally supported early development in the Suzuki spirit, helping to establish the Early Development Association in Japan in the late 1960s that researched the Suzuki method in general classroom settings. Like Shinichi Suzuki, Ibuka (1977) felt strongly that reaching very young children through quality Suzuki-inspired education was not about "producing specialists and geniuses" (p. 181), but it was based on "my hopes of educating every infant to develop fully his potential abilities and to grow up courageous in thought and straightforward in character" (p. 181). Ibuka (1977), again echoing Shinichi Suzuki, expressed the hope and the need that children's good character, developed by early and thoughtful education, would be advantageous to the larger society, one that continued to be besieged by strife and ill will:

While we sing the praises of our high level of civilization and the expansion of our economy, we still witness on this

earth wars, racial prejudice, and hostilities among nations, in spite of the fact that people all over the world have been reaching out for promotion of world peace through such organizations as the United Nations, UNESCO, and WHO. However, it is an almost impossible task for our generation to create a peaceful world where people can sincerely trust and tolerate one another. [...] True world peace no longer depends on us, the adults of the present, but on the generation who are at present infants. (pp. 181-182)

Ibuka (1977) and Suzuki both expressed that the hope for a better future resides in the youngest generation, who if educated properly, could overcome the challenges of worldwide injustice and violent conflict (Borg & Grech, 2017). More than only a music pedagogy, a recent study undertaken by Hendricks and Bucci (2019) supports the notion that the Suzuki philosophy can be applied successfully in early childhood general education classrooms with music, art, and other subjects, to transmit personal character traits like kindness and mutual respect, fostering a sense of responsibility and care towards others.

Demanding self-criticism

Scholarly inquiry demands scrutiny of held assumptions. In this context, Jorgensen (2006/1992) found that "Teachers have defended their chosen method(s) on the basis of personally held opinions rather than dispassionately reasoned arguments" (p. 181). When Jorgensen (2003) decried that music teachers were not more critically aware of the methodologies they use to teach, such as Dalcroze, Kodály, Orff, and Suzuki, disapproving of teachers making teaching decisions based on practical classroom considerations, "rather than rational theories and instructional methodologies" (p. 12), Hendricks (2011) presented a rebuttal that drew attention to a lack of appreciation for Suzuki's roots in Eastern music philosophy and which, according to Hendricks (2011), lay at the basis of the pedagogy. Jorgensen (2003) had observed that "prescriptive instructional methods do not last very long" (p. 12) and that all methods have "desirable and undesirable features" (p. 12). Hendricks (2011) countered that Suzuki teachers "regularly reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching" (p. 138) to check themselves and the approach they are using, referring to Suzuki teachers' professional development, whereby they are required to attend certification courses in which they become familiar with and invested in practical and theoretical Suzuki teaching elements. Ongoing workshops, teacher training courses, conferences, retreats, and weeklong summer Suzuki music institutes are regularly offered to Suzuki teachers (Suzuki Association of the Americas, 2003).

A few studies have looked at Suzuki teacher training programs (Blunt 1987; Einarson, Guerriero, D'Ercole, Hendricks, & Mitchell, 2015; Hersh 1995; Sever 2019). In particular, the in-depth ethnographic study by Hersh (1995)

about Suzuki's teacher development program in Japan demonstrates that Shinichi Suzuki's pre-eminent concern was to impress on teachers a focus on "the welfare of humanity" (p. 64) by helping to create happy children and "fine human beings" (p. 65). To foster musical ability, teachers required "[s]piritual growth, [the] ability to be moved spiritually, [and the] ability to express the character of a given piece" (p. 65), as well as musical skills and general aesthetic sensitivity. As Hersh (1995) noted, Shinichi Suzuki was guided by "the belief that art is a spiritual quest" (p. 172), encouraging teachers to experience music similarly.

The notion of self-criticism is incongruous within the holistic framework which values self-acceptance, compassion, and a nonjudgmental awareness, or mindfulness, of being in the moment "without criticizing or praising what is going on" (J. P. Miller, 2002, p. 96). Such an approach is also applied in the pedagogy itself, as the child is not criticized for how its playing; it is accepted for what and where it is at the moment (Landers, 1984/1980; Mills & Murphy, 1973). The teacher will demonstrate how the child might add another layer to its playing, often using humour or exaggeration to point out a detail. When the child is ready, it will follow suit.

Carrying on amid an undercurrent of mistrust

Attacks on Shinichi Suzuki's integrity were leveled by the American musician Mark O'Connor, who also had major criticisms of the method itself (Cooper, 2014). These were reported by several journalistic publications (Greene, 2014), as well as circulating on the Internet. One article suggested that a failed personal relationship with a Suzuki-trained string player was at the root of the timing of O'Connor's disenchantment with all things Suzuki (Niles, 2014, "Going over NPR's story," section 4). Meanwhile, a commercial interest in marketing O'Connor's very own string playing method as superior to that of the Suzuki approach cannot be discounted as a motivating factor (O'Connor, 2009). Several articles and some scholarly research have since indeed contrasted the two methods (Goolcharan, 2018; Su, 2012), lending credence to the speculation that O'Connor sought to increase pedagogical visibility by being in vocal opposition to the Suzuki method (International Suzuki Association, 2014; Lebrecht, 2014), since Suzuki music books and recordings have enjoyed successful sales by relying on word-of-mouth and an institutionalized marketing network of string teachers, music schools, and parents. By thus attempting to aggressively tap into that same market of current and future string players, which is a limited one and potentially competitively fought over, O'Connor, a Grammy Award winning fiddler who emphasizes that the O'Connor string playing method is "American" (O'Connor, n. d.), traded on a known lingering undercurrent of mistrust of the Suzuki pedagogy as foreign and not compatible with American culture. While the Suzuki approach is celebrated by those who use it as a highly successful pedagogy, a

wariness exists that is tacitly understood among musicians, music teachers, and administrators in music institutions, who may avoid mentioning affiliation with the Suzuki approach outside the Suzuki community if they suspect it will cast them or the students in a negative light, especially if they find themselves in a traditional and prestigious music education environment (R. Aaron, personal communication, May 23, 2014). Although O'Connor's allegations against Suzuki have been refuted (Cooper, 2014; International Suzuki Association, 2014; Lebrecht, 2014; The Violin Channel, 2014), they were a reminder of the method not necessarily enjoying an altogether accepted mainstream status. It is in this light, perhaps, that most writings about Shinichi Suzuki and the method by those familiar with the Suzuki approach can be understood as being protective and celebratory, rather than self-critical in Jorgensen's (2003) sense.

As Eubanks (2015) observed, students directly taught by Shinichi Suzuki and the successive generations of teachers, students, and parents that have applied Shinichi Suzuki's original holistic principles through subsequent Suzuki teacher trainers, have all added their own interpretations of the philosophy, whose central "goal was to produce noble human beings with high ability, through teaching them to play the violin at a high level" (p. 132). Hendricks (2011, 2018) and Thompson (2016) indicate that the spiritual and compassionate values in Suzuki pedagogy are recognized for their enduring importance in nurturing such individuals along with the promise of a more compassionate world and its living soul through playing and listening to music.

Implications

Implications for music teachers, preservice music teachers, and Suzuki parents regarding holistic music teaching and learning include the need for an understanding of the holistic worldview. This may require a deliberate effort of resisting pedagogical models and societal values that emphasize music as rigorous training instead of music as an opportunity to develop the whole person whose humanity demonstrates connectivity and caring. The spiritual and aesthetic components foregrounded in the Suzuki approach go hand in hand with the cultivation of musical ability.

Suzuki teacher trainers and Suzuki teachers have an important role to play in continuously impressing upon Suzuki teachers, as well as upon Suzuki students and parents that the holistic dimensions of the Suzuki approach are foundational. They are a prerequisite for the development of fine musicianship and fine human beings.

Finally, the work of Benedict (2009) on Orff and Kodaly, two early childhood music teaching and learning methods meant to enable "free play and creativity" (p. 213), but "serve to reproduce systems of domination" (p. 213), suggests that all

methods merit scrutiny for their potential to subjugate. While the focus in this article has been on demonstrating the presence of holistic principles in Suzuki music pedagogy, future research on this topic could include the exploration of the possible tension between holistic values and the attainment of high-level musical skills through practicing. In addition, the extent to which other music pedagogies may also exhibit holistic characteristics deserves attention.

Conclusion

Critiques of the Suzuki approach ignore its holistic principles and the pedagogy's affiliation with Western progressivism (Eubanks, 2015). While Shinichi Suzuki's writings are a clear expression of holistic ideals and Suzuki practitioners are trained to infuse their teaching with a series of holistic tenets, Suzuki music pedagogy is often misunderstood (Eubanks, 2015; Hendricks, 2011, 2018). Based on a literature review of works about the Suzuki approach, as well as writings by the violin pedagogue Shinichi Suzuki, this article has attempted to establish the pedagogy's connection with holistic educational elements. An integrated approach in which all dimensions of a child are nurtured in the educational process, with attention to happiness, love, and compassion, Suzuki pedagogy values the interconnectedness between all that exists. Its aim is not only to foster technical and musical ability, but also good character, exemplified by care for others and the world.

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